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THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY. VOL. I.

CHRISTIANITY AS LIFE

BY
EDWARD GRUBB, M.A.

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“ Christianity means, above all things, actions and life according to the Spirit of Christ, of the risen Christ, who lives for ever among us.”

FOGAZZARO, *The Saint*.

PREFACE

CHRISTIANITY entered the world of men in the form not of a philosophy or a dogma but of a Personal Life, and proved its worth not as an institution but as an inspiration. The purpose of this book is to amplify this statement in the light of history : to indicate the characteristics of our religion in its Golden Age, and some aspects of its human development ; and to estimate its effects on the lives of individuals and on human society.

But, while Christianity is in essence a new life brought to men by Jesus Christ, there was from the first wrapped up in it a new outlook on the universe : a sense that the ultimate Reality is of the kind manifested in personal life and character : an intuition of what is called the Fatherhood of God. It follows that the Life involves also a Belief ; and the question cannot be avoided whether such Belief is True. This question will, it is hoped, be examined in a second volume.

The author is a convinced and lifelong member of the Society of Friends, which from its origin has held to Christianity not as dogma but as life ; and this must be his apology for the place he has given to its Quaker interpretation. There is in this no sectarian or polemical intention. The debt which the author owes to many students of Christianity of various ways of thought is overwhelming, and it is too manifest to need detailed acknowledgment. If there is little in his presentation that

is new, he will be content if it adds a stone or two to the fabric of the new-old Christianity that is being built up to-day by many hands, and which seems to offer the only real hope to our distracted world.

My thanks are due to my friend William E. Wilson, B.D., for kindly reading the proof and for making some useful suggestions.

EDWARD GRUBB

LETCHWORTH,

January 1927

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PART I

THE RELIGION OF JESUS

SUMMARY

The ultimate data for an enquiry into the nature of Christianity must be sought in the mind of Jesus Christ, which as a fact in history will bear historical investigation. Jesus was a real man who felt himself to be in a unique relation of Sonship to God, and therefore to be the Divinely appointed Deliverer whom his people were expecting. But his thoughts of Messiahship, being interpreted in the light of the prophecy of the suffering Servant, were more inward and spiritual than those of his contemporaries. His experience of God, and his method of overcoming evil by obedience, faith and love, were to be shared in and continued by his disciples. He knew himself to be a Revealer of God and therefore of the ultimate principles of life ; and his moral teaching is the ethic of love begotten in the souls of men who will receive and respond to the love of God

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDER OF CHRISTIANITY

THE great religious movements in human history, each of which has marked (for a time at least) a forward step in the progress of mankind, have usually had their origin in the personality and the religious experience of some highly endowed individual. Judaism looks back to Abraham and Moses ; Buddhism to Gautama ; Islam to Mohammed ; and Christianity to Jesus Christ. The same is true of the reforming movements within the great religions—as, in Christianity, those associated with Francis of Assisi, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, George Fox, John Wesley. In general these movements begin after a time of religious deadness or corruption or formalism, when many souls are dissatisfied, and are seeking, blindly it may be and with little hope, for someone who can “ speak to their condition ”—who can supply an answer to their seemingly bootless quest for an undoubted word of God. It is often when men, despairing, feel as though God had forsaken His world, that the prophet appears. If we wish to grasp the special significance of any of these great revivals of religion, it will therefore be needful to study in the first instance the personality of the founder, the circumstances in which his message to the world was given, and the special experiences through which he was prepared and qualified to deliver it. This is as true of Christianity as it is of other religions, but the fact has not been given its due place.

On the one hand Christianity has been presented, and has therefore been criticized, as either a body of “ truth ”

vouched for by a Divine revelation, or as a system of Church order instituted by Divine authority ; usually as both together. But, when we study the origins of these beliefs and these institutions, we find that neither creeds nor Church arrangements have any certain basis in the mind of Jesus Christ. It was not to the Gospels that the bishops of the early centuries looked for the material with which to build the creeds of the Church ; and we search these documents in vain for any answer to the question, What constitutes a valid ministry or valid sacraments ?

On the other hand the attempt has been made, by Mr. John M. Robertson and others, to dispense altogether with a personal founder of Christianity. Our religion is supposed by them to have arisen as the outcome of certain conditions and movements in the Jewish and pagan worlds before and at the commencement of the Christian era. Jesus, it is asserted, is a mythical figure, with no more historical reality than the Arthur of the old romances ; and the Gospels are the product of a movement which arose out of a forgotten cult of a dying and rising God.¹ Detailed examination of these efforts to get rid of the historical reality of Jesus is impossible within the compass of the present work. I can only say that the authors, despite the strength that comes with knowledge, appear to me to show weakness in several directions : in their historical sense of the ways in which things actually happen ; in their understanding of the psychology of religious movements ; in their appreciation of the literary qualities of the Gospels, and of the conditions under which such works could have been written. Their attention has been so riveted on the obscure that they have well-nigh lost sight of the obvious. They seem to miss the imprint of reality which the Gospels, with

¹ See Robertson, *Pagan Christs*, etc. ; Arthur Drews, *The Christ Myth*, etc. ; Gilbert T. Sadler, *The Inner Meaning of the Four Gospels*, etc.

all their fragmentariness and possible contradictions, make on any careful and unprejudiced reader : the impress of a real Character, greater than the Evangelists or their informants had fully grasped ; a Character whose lineaments, when regarded in the full light of historical study, seem to blend into a clear, consistent and intelligible whole.

I take it as not open to serious question that Jesus was a real man, of transcendent personal character and impressiveness, who lived and died a violent death in Judea during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius ; and that enquiry into the nature of Christianity must begin with the study of what he was, what he thought, and what he did. As to the sources of our knowledge concerning him, I assume that the Synoptic Gospels, and also the Acts of the Apostles, were written in the first century, and give us, in the main, real history. The writings of the Apostle Paul are earlier than any of these books, but contain little of a historical character concerning Jesus except that he was born of a woman and of " the seed of David," that he lived a sinless and loving life, shared the Last Supper with his disciples, was crucified, and rose from the dead. The fourth Gospel is generally acknowledged to be a later work, dating perhaps from the beginning of the second century, and giving a spiritual interpretation of Jesus and his teaching rather than a strictly historical record. While it contains material that appears to be genuine history, based on the recollections of an actual companion of Jesus, it should not be placed on the same level with the Synoptics as an authority for facts—particularly in regard to the self-consciousness and self-disclosure of Jesus. In the Synoptics his belief in himself as Messiah is kept in the background till near the end ; in " John " it is obtruded from the beginning. The distinction is important for our present purpose ; because, in so far as the later picture is coloured by the religious experience and reflection of a follower of

Jesus, it cannot be regarded, at least without reservations, as giving us actual knowledge of what as a man he felt himself to be, and of the work which he believed he had been sent to do.

As regards the Synoptic Gospels, it is now admitted by students that of these narratives Mark's is the earliest, and that the first and third Evangelists made extensive use of it. These two writers seem also to have used an early collection of the shorter Sayings of Jesus, which is provisionally labelled "Q," but is no longer extant.¹ There are moreover large portions of these two Gospels, containing many incidents and longer parables, which are found neither in Mark nor in Q. Since these portions contain very little in common, they are believed to have been derived from independent sources. Canon Streeter, in his noteworthy book *The Four Gospels*, suggests that they rest upon two written accounts of Jesus and his teaching, compiled perhaps at Jerusalem and Caesarea respectively: he labels them "M" and "L." He has shown weighty reasons for believing that Luke was himself the compiler of L, and that he united it with Q—issuing his Gospel in an early edition ("Proto-Luke") before he had met with Mark's record. Then he enlarged his work by incorporating considerable portions of Mark, prefixing a story which he had found of the birth and infancy of Jesus, and adding an account of some appearances of Jesus after death. "Matthew" (the unknown author of the first Gospel) similarly used nearly the whole of Mark, weaving into it M and Q, and adding traditions quite different from those used by Luke concerning the infancy and resurrection. Apart from these stories, then, Canon Streeter makes the first and third Gospels depend on four early documents,

¹ Many attempts have been made to reconstruct "Q," of which I may mention one by Canon Streeter in the book alluded to in the text, and another by Rev. J. M. C. Crum in the *Hibbert Journal* for July 1926.

whose dates and places of origin he thinks may have been roughly these :

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|----------|---------|----|-----------|-------|------|----|
| Q, | compiled | perhaps | at | Antioch | about | A.D. | 50 |
| Mark, | „ | „ | „ | Rome | „ | A.D. | 60 |
| L, | „ | „ | „ | Cæsarea | „ | A.D. | 60 |
| M, | „ | „ | „ | Jerusalem | „ | A.D. | 65 |

The first Gospel, approximately in its present form, he dates at Antioch about A.D. 85, and the third possibly at Corinth a little earlier.¹

If, as I am inclined to think, this theory explains the facts better than any other yet advanced, it is clear that each of the probable sources carries its own weight ; and that we cannot regard narratives that appear in all three Gospels as being necessarily better attested than those recorded by one author alone.² At the same time, the Gospel of Mark stands out as the one that is most nearly due to reports from an eye-witness of the events recorded : there is an early and probably trustworthy tradition that it rests upon the recollections of Peter. It differs from the other two in its vivid and unpolished style, in the “ objective ” and untheological character of its story, and in its naïve acknowledgment of the human limitations of Jesus, of the attempt of his family to stop his work, and of the dullness and dissensions of the Twelve.³

¹ It would seem that “ Matthew ” and Luke as we have them cannot be widely apart in date, since there is little or no evidence that either author used or even knew of the work of the other.

² There are reasons for thinking that on the whole the compiler of L was more careful to sift his facts than the compiler of M and the Evangelist “ Matthew ” who followed him ; and that consequently some narratives or teachings that appear in “ Matthew ” only are subject to rather more uncertainty than such as are recorded only by Luke. Note particularly the allusions to “ the Church ” in Matt. xvi. and xviii. ; the stories of Peter walking on the water in xiv. 28-31, and of the resurrection of bodies of the saints in xxvii. 52 f. ; and the command to baptize with the trinitarian formula in xxviii. 19.

³ As, for example, in Mark iii. 21, iv. 13, vi. 5, 51 f., viii. 17 f., ix. 10, 33-35, x. 14, 24, 32, etc. All these passages are either omitted, or

So much as to our sources of information. The real task of this chapter is the very difficult one of attempting to indicate in broadest outline what these documents suggest to us of the human figure of Jesus, his conception of the nature and requirements of the life with God, and of his own place and work in bringing men into that life. While, as has been said above, the mind of Jesus Christ must always be the foundation of any enquiry into the nature of Christianity, we must not assume that we can find in the Gospel story the whole of what we are seeking. For there was certainly more in his mind than he could disclose to his disciples while he was with them in the body—just because of their lack of understanding. Not till after his death and victory, and his return to them in spiritual presence, were their minds opened to receive and apply his deepest thoughts. Hence the religious experience of the first Christians, as it found expression in the Pauline and Johannine writings, and elsewhere, will also need careful study.

What then was the quality and character of Jesus, as the Synoptic records disclose it to us? Over his early years a veil is drawn. There is only the suggestive story in Luke of the Finding in the Temple, where it appears that even as a boy of twelve he was already conscious of an intimate relation with God, and of a direct call to be “about his Father’s business” or “in His house.” Equally suggestive is the brief remark that follows, that he went home with his parents “and was subject to them.” He acted faithfully the part of a dutiful eldest son in the little home at Nazareth; where, as the expression “the carpenter” in Mark vi. 3 suggests, he probably carried on the business

considerably modified, in Matthew and Luke. “It is clear that the somewhat ruthless treatment of the Apostolic circle, in a Gospel which must have emanated from that circle, is a strong evidence for its authentic character.” (J. A. Findlay, *Jesus as they saw Him*, p. 56.)

after the death of Joseph. Many of his later parables were drawn from the familiar scenes of the cottage—perhaps only a single room for living and sleeping—where with his younger brothers and sisters he had been brought up. The candle that lit the whole “house”—the lost coin that rolled under some article of furniture—the women grinding at the hand-mill—the leaven put into the mass of dough, causing it to heave and bubble till it was fit to bake—the mud oven in which “the grass of the field” was the fuel used—these are surely pictures drawn from his home, which had been stamped upon his boyish memory.¹ He would go to the village school and join in games with his school-fellows—and he remembered how sometimes they were sulky and would not play. His parents and their nearest friends were among “the quiet in the land,” trained in the purest religion of the ancient world, and “looking,” as did their Pharisee teachers, “for the Kingdom of God.” That they provided for his careful instruction in the Scriptures of their people is evident; and he learned to read these writings with an insight that none of his elders possessed. From the crowded home, and after laborious days, he would seek rest and refreshment on the hills around, where the beauty of birds and flowers spoke to him of his Father’s care. And often he would see the caravans, laden with merchandise from Egypt or from the East, pass along the great road that ran near Nazareth, or troops of soldiers marching to distant places.

His early manhood must have brought him into close touch with the sorrows of his people—those warm-hearted impulsive Galileans who were ever ready, if a signal of revolt were given, to rise against their Roman oppressors. Disease, especially blindness, was rife in the crowded mud hovels of the villages around. His mind was formed far less from books than from contact with human life. Sym-

¹ Glover, *The Jesus of History*, chapter ii.

pathy with his people's longing for deliverance he must have felt—and he must have shared the common hope of a Deliverer. Gradually, it may have begun to dawn on him that this would be his own life's work. Yet until he was nearly thirty years of age he apparently made no sign that he felt any such mighty task to be laid upon him.¹ It is one of the chief evidences of the greatness and strength of his character that during all those years he quietly waited until he inwardly knew that the time was ripe for him to leave caring for the family, and to come forward as a leader of men.

While he was waiting, the news spread that there was again a prophet in the land. The work of John the Baptist, who according to Luke's story was a near relative of Jesus, will claim attention in the next chapter. Here we must consider the action of Jesus in coming forward as a candidate for baptism. John was calling the people to repentance; but there is no sign that the conscience of Jesus was burdened with any sense of personal sin—indeed there is much evidence to the contrary. The new rite was probably intended to mark those who were ready for the eagerly expected Kingdom of God; ² and, if Jesus already felt this to be in a very special manner his own concern, he doubtless wished to take his place with others who were preparing for it. If he were indeed himself to be the Divinely appointed inaugurator of the Kingdom, he would not allow this to separate him from his brethren. His public ministry began, as it closed, with an act of lowly dedication to the will of his Father, and of identification of himself with sinning and suffering humanity.

¹ Mark vi. 1-6. When he did "begin to teach in the synagogue" his townspeople were offended because he was only one of themselves.

² See further Chapter II, p. 39. If John recognized Jesus as the Coming One, this recognition would undoubtedly confirm in the latter the sense of a Divine call; but in view of the silence of Mark on the subject it must be considered doubtful.

There is therefore a psychological fitness in the remarkable experience which followed, described by the evangelists as the descent of the Spirit upon him, and the voice from heaven (heard doubtless by himself alone), "Thou art my Son, my beloved one, in thee I am well pleased."¹ The close association—we might even say the identification—of lowliness with exaltation is one of the most striking and original characteristics of the mind of Jesus. Both conceptions are implied in the title he chose for indicating what he felt the real Messiah would be—"the Son of Man." It was when he had made himself one with his brethren that he felt himself called by God to be their deliverer, and endued with Divine power to achieve the task.

That the inward experience which followed his baptism marks the point in his life at which Jesus became assured that the Messianic work was his, and that the time had come to begin it, is indicated by the terrible inward struggle which followed. "The Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness," says Mark, "and he was with the wild beasts." No details of the Temptation are given here, but "Matthew" and Luke have supplied them, doubtless from the collection of Sayings from which they drew. The story must have been told by Jesus to the disciples, with his usual vivid imagery. We can very imperfectly understand it, because any experience of our own is at a far different level. But

¹ Mark i. 9-11. Note "*he saw*," and contrast the words attributed to the Baptist in John i. 32, "*I have beheld*." Some ancient MSS. in the parallel passage Luke iii. 22 make the words from heaven a quotation from Psalm ii. 7, "Thou art my Son, *this day have I begotten thee*." If the ordinary reading is the true one, the words are probably an echo of Isa. xlii. 1, "my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth," in which case there is evidence that from this early time Jesus felt himself to be identified with the Servant of Jehovah in the later Isaiah. The only other direct identification, apart from comments by the evangelists, is I think in Luke xxii. 37; but it is just possible that his coming forward for baptism was connected with the words "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12). (See Manson, *Christ's View of the Kingdom of God*, p. 128.)

we can easily see that such a spiritual conflict was inevitable if Jesus was a real man, an obscure workman bred in a country village, who felt himself imperatively called by God to the greatest of possible tasks. How could he undertake it, and what did it involve? What sort of a Messiah was he to be? How was he to use the Divine power that would surely be given him? Was he to expect continual miracles to be wrought for his own benefit? Was he to work "signs from heaven" to convince the unbelieving world, as for instance by casting himself from a pinnacle of the temple? Above all, was he to use the world's methods of force and cunning, in order to win "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them"? All these suggestions he put aside as temptations of the Evil One. In those weeks of solitude and hunger he wrestled with the problem of Messiahship; and, along with this, of God's method of winning the world to himself. God's representative, he seems clearly to have discerned, must reveal God's character, and work in God's way, not man's. If his Father were perfect love, his method could only be the method of love to the uttermost, love which must involve suffering.¹ Already, it would seem, he had discerned that the real Messiah would be very different from the outwardly victorious Deliverer whom his people were expecting. Already he had probably discovered what no one of his contemporaries had ever thought of, that the true picture of the Messiah had been drawn (perhaps unconsciously) by the writer of the sections in the later Isaiah that depict the suffering Servant of Jehovah—the picture of one who was not a conquering "son of David," but "despised and

¹ This is the clue to his conception not only of the Messiah's function but of the Kingdom itself—which will be considered in the next chapter. It has been shown with great probability that the book of Zechariah, with its picture of a King who is "lowly, riding upon an ass," helped to form the Messianic consciousness of Jesus. (Coates, *The Christ of Revolution*, pp. 44, 45.)

rejected of men.”¹ To be such a Messiah was far more overwhelmingly difficult than to lead a popular revolt. How was he to win acknowledgment from his people, who were looking for something totally different? And, unless some at least were brought to acknowledge him, in spite of his probable rejection by the authorities of the nation, and possible death as an impostor, what possibility was there of success?

Our records suggest that Jesus came forth from his solitary conflict, with his mind made up to a definite course of action—a plan incredibly difficult, and fraught inevitably with the deepest discouragements, which yet he faithfully carried through. The only way to accomplish the task laid upon him would seem to be to find a few men of the necessary character—earnest, sincere, impressionable, courageous—whom by his personal influence and by words and deeds of love he might mould into his own image; in whom he might inspire such a fervent belief in himself and in his Divine mission as would not be finally destroyed even by his death, should that be his portion; men to whom he could entrust the achievement of the task which he himself could only begin. Hence his selection of the twelve. Hence his careful instruction of them in the nature of the Kingdom as he conceived it. Hence his trust in them, shown by the commission to share with him in the proclamation of the Kingdom; his rejoicing when they seemed to be learners, and his deep and overwhelming anxiety at their slowness of understanding.² Even to these chosen

¹ See above, p. 21, note.

² This view, that the plan of selecting and training a few intimate disciples was thought out by Jesus in the wilderness, does not conflict with the apparent fact that the Jewish authorities and people proved even less receptive to his message than he at first expected. He seems to have begun his work in Galilee on a wide scale, and as opposition deepened to have withdrawn with his disciples that he might train them more effectively alone. There is no reason to doubt that the necessity of his death for the establishment of the Kingdom grew clearer to him as time went on; yet even to the end, as his prayer in Gethsemane shows, he was not absolutely sure that he would have to die.

few, it seems, he did not explicitly declare what he felt himself to be, but left the great secret for them to discover themselves. At last, at Cæsarea Philippi, he put straight to them the question, "Who say ye that I am?" and received from Peter the longed-for answer, "Thou art the Messiah." At once he gave strict orders that this should not be made known to others, and "*began* to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be killed."¹ But as yet such a thought was to them impossible, and when Peter began to rebuke him Jesus turned on him sharply with "Get thee behind me, Satan." Peter had revived in him the old temptation to shirk the hard way, to ease his path by yielding, to some extent, to the popular demand.

Just at this critical juncture comes the strange and significant story of the Transfiguration—an experience which perhaps we may think of as a collective vision, which three of his most intimate disciples were permitted to share. Whatever its psychology may be, it fitted exactly the needs of the situation. Some more than ordinary experience was needed to raise the faith and courage of those dull disciples to a point at which it would be able to face the Cross. Luke's account² contains features which can hardly be mere imaginative additions to Mark's bald narrative. He says that the change in the appearance of Jesus took place while he was praying; that Peter and the others "were heavy with sleep, but when they were fully awake they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." He also says that these visitors from the unseen were speaking of his "exodus," which he was about to "complete" at Jerusalem. The words in this connection are unusual, and can hardly be due to the historian's fancy; he is apparently drawing from a first-hand source. Both Mark and Luke record that, when a drifting cloud had covered them, a voice was heard repeating the words that Jesus had heard

¹ Mark viii. 29-32.

² Luke ix. 28-36.

after his baptism—"This is my beloved (or chosen) Son"—with the addition, "Hear ye him."

The evangelists evidently thought of the occurrence as intended to help the faith of the disciples. But it has, perhaps, an even deeper significance from the point of view of Jesus himself. To meet the Cross unflinchingly *he* also needed a re-invigoration of faith and courage. And it came to him, we may gather, in accordance with that deep spiritual law that, as he saw, connected exaltation with lowliness. With him this was more than an idea, it was an experience. It was when at his baptism he had made himself one with his brethren that he received the full assurance of his Divine vocation and of the power to fulfil it. It is now that he has dedicated himself in absolute surrender to the Father's will, however dark and difficult the path may be, that the radiant vision comes to him, with a Divine message of cheer and assurance.

Before proceeding to deal with the ethical teaching of Jesus, a few more words seem to be needed in regard to the inward source from which it flowed. The foundation on which rested his assurance of a special Divine vocation was undoubtedly his deep and all-pervading consciousness of God as his Father in heaven, and of himself as in a quite unique sense God's Son. These words "Father" and "Son" we are obliged to use. They were his own; and there are no others which express so well the relation which he felt subsisting between himself and God. But, if we are faithful to our sources of information, we must beware of reading into these words the theological ideas that became attached to them in later Christian thought. They are terms of religious experience, not of religious theory; and we can only interpret them rightly as we ourselves share in some measure the experience they represent. Jesus stands before us as One in whom the filial

consciousness was perfectly experienced ; and he calls on his followers to share the consciousness with him.¹ He *was* the Son of God because in him the Divine character was perfectly expressed ; and his disciples were to *become* sons of God by having that same character reproduced in themselves. "Ye therefore shall be perfect (in love), even as your heavenly Father is perfect." As the Father makes His sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good, so those who would "become" (γένησθε) His children must love their enemies and pray for their persecutors (Matt. v. 43-48).

This is not merely incidental in the public teaching of Jesus ; it is central and fundamental. The religion he taught is the same as that which he himself practised. The disciples were to take, in company with him, the way of life that was revealed to him during his conflict in the wilderness. He knew that he was to overcome, not by overwhelming his opponents with fire from God, but by winning them with gentleness and love to the uttermost. That was the way of Jesus because he knew it to be the way of God himself, and that must be the way for his disciples also. Love to the uttermost meant forgiveness to the uttermost. This was his way of overcoming evil, and his followers must adopt the same. Forgiveness of injuries, in the spirit of all-embracing and conquering love, is constantly insisted on by Jesus as the first necessity for those who would be his disciples.² It holds an important

¹ The passage which most profoundly expresses the self-consciousness of Jesus is Matt. xi. 25-27 = Luke x. 21, 22. Though the language is almost that of the fourth Gospel, the passage is from Q, and must rest on a trustworthy tradition. The expression was clearly wrung from Jesus at a time of inward crisis, but the two evangelists give it in different connections, and we cannot be sure what the conditions were. It is, he says, to the "babes" that revelation comes ; and because he is himself the perfect "babe" he has a unique revelation of God. His knowledge of God is to be imparted to those to whom he "wills" to reveal Him—that is, those who share his childlike spirit. In Matthew this is immediately followed by the invitation to the weary and heavy-laden.

² See Matt. v. 21-24, 38-48, vi. 12-15, vii. 12, xviii. 21-35 ; Mark xi. 25 ; Luke ix. 51-56, xvii. 3, 4, etc.

place in the Lord's Prayer. We commonly think of it as referring to the relations of individuals to one another, but it certainly has a wider scope. When Jesus called his disciples to love their enemies, he was demanding, and they probably recognized that he was demanding, forgiveness for the Roman oppressors of the nation.¹ This is the clue to the difficult command (Matt. v. 39), "Resist not him that is evil." It is not that injustice is to be passively accepted as if it did not matter, or as if it were in accordance with the will of God. It is that wrong, on however large a scale, must be met as God meets it, and must be overcome in His way—not by violence, but by great-hearted gentleness, long-suffering, and the genuine forgiveness that becomes possible when self is forgotten in love.² Paul had exactly caught the spirit of the religion of Jesus when he wrote, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This lies at the heart of the life and teaching of Jesus, and of his revelation of the Father, and if we miss its significance we misunderstand the whole. His thought is moulded throughout by the spirit that led him to the Cross.

The whole of the ethical teaching of Jesus is summarized in the double command to love God with all the heart, and one's neighbour as oneself.³ This is not a "command" in the ordinary sense of the word, because it is not in the power of man to obey it by an act of will. Love in its very nature is instinctive and spontaneous; it cannot be manufactured to order. Jesus, the prophet of love, was therefore much more than the teacher of a higher morality.

¹ Coates, *The Christ of Revolution*, pp. 52, 53. "The Sermon on the Mount is only half understood if it is forgotten that Jesus has in mind as the ultimate and epoch-making application of his principles a new way of meeting the tyranny of Rome."

² For an incisive exposition of "Resist not him that is evil" and the three illustrations in Matt. v. 39-41, see Findlay, *Jesus as they saw Him*, pp. 228 ff.

³ Mark xii. 28-31; compare Luke x. 25-28 and Matt. xxii. 34-40.

He felt that what the Father had given him for men was a Gospel—that he had come to bring them not an added burden but a great refreshment of soul.

The Gospel that Jesus brought was not, however, that of the shallow optimist who shuts his eyes to the tragedy of man's life. Born and trained in the Jewish faith, he shared with the best of his people a deep sense of human sin and of its terrible consequences. Indeed, he felt the darkness of it as only One could feel it who had always lived in the sunshine of the Divine purity and love. That men could and did close their hearts to light and love was to him the most awful of all facts. Hence his frequent and urgent warnings as to the consequences of sin—the outer darkness, the worm that dieth not, the unquenchable fire. But in his thoughts, after allowance is made for the failure of his reporters to reach his level of insight, these terrible consequences would seem to have been a part of the necessary order of the world—the inevitable results of moral evil and hardness of heart when deliberately persisted in; not any more a part of God's design for men than is moral evil itself.¹ The Father's love was absolutely universal, including "the unthankful and the evil," and that of His children must be the same. This cannot have meant that they were to feel towards evil men exactly as they felt towards their dearest friends. But it did mean that they were to share the sense of oneness with them which Jesus showed; to perceive as he did the Divine worth even of the most hardened and impenitent soul; to cast out all hatred and revenge, and treat the worst of men as potential brothers, with a yearning desire to bring them into fellowship. The new experience of God as Father was to carry with it a new outreaching sense of the brotherhood of all men.

Jesus saw plainly that the religion of his people was not

¹ This subject is more fully treated in Chapter II, pp. 30 f.

working real deliverance from sin, or bringing them into true harmony with God, with one another, or with men in general. The effort to win righteousness by striving to keep perfectly an elaborate code of precepts ended in failure, for if it seemed to succeed it only produced the complacency of the Scribes and Pharisees. Not by self-effort could men be delivered from themselves, and brought to realize their unity with one another. The only real cure for sin, especially for the subtle and most dangerous forms of sin that lurked beneath outward respectability—pride and self-complacency and hardness of heart—was that a man should be brought right down to the bottom and begin again in a different way. Only as a great love took possession of him could he escape from the burden of self. It was easier for the “sinners” to find it than for the “righteous,” because they knew, as the latter did not, that they were wrong and were in need of God. It was easier for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye than for a rich man—especially if rich in the sense of his own moral success—to enter into the Kingdom. Hence the justice of the charge that Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners.

“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees”—“except ye turn and become as little children”—“ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven.”¹ Was this after all a new burden, added to the burden of the Law, which the true seekers after God already found heavier than they could carry? Not so—for to the childlike heart God would make himself known as Father. That which was hidden from the wise and understanding would be revealed to babes. What Jesus felt he could bring to men was this new sense of God—not as distant Lawgiver, not as exacting Judge, not as abstract Righteousness—but as a present personal Father. The only conditions were the sense of need and the willing-

¹ Matt. v. 20, xviii. 3.

ness to obey. To the labouring he offers refreshment—to those who will share with him the yoke he carries he gives the assurance, from his own experience, that they will find it not hard but easy. If it is an added burden, it is such a burden as wings are to a bird or sails to a ship; it brings new powers, new progress, new love, new joy.

The double "command," of love to God and love to men, is therefore (as was said above) not a command in the sense of an order to a man to do what he can do if he chooses. The power to love lies deeper than the will; it springs up spontaneously, when a lovely object is presented, in the soul that is not closed by self. And Jesus brought a Gospel to men because he showed them, in himself, what the love of God was like, and made them conscious that it was not an idea but a reality. He revealed the Father—not in abstract terms, but as a Person to persons.

Thus the morality of Jesus is wholly one with his religion: apart from this it is impracticable. First and foremost he was not a teacher but a Revealer—a Revealer not of abstract truth or of any ethical "system," but of concrete spiritual reality. In his presence seeking souls found God as they had never found Him before; the very word "God" took on a new richness of meaning. Jesus was able to share with them his own consciousness of Sonship, his own joy in God. And this, as far as they received it, filled their souls with love to men. The true follower of Jesus therefore no longer needed an elaborate code of rules by which to order his life; his heart and will being set right, good conduct necessarily followed; when the tree was made healthy, it naturally began to bear good fruit.¹ "The Grace of God" is a term that does not occur in the Synoptic Gospels, but if given its full meaning it exactly expresses what the true disciples of Jesus discovered in their lives. They found that God was able to lift them clean out of

¹ Matt. xii. 33; compare Matt. vii. 17, 18.

the weary round of self-preservation, to bring them into an experience from which right conduct flowed as naturally as the songs of birds in the morning, or as the scent and hues of a flower in the sunshine.¹ 'The ethic of Jesus is the natural morality of a human soul set right with its spiritual environment. Because it is rooted in love it is self-regardless, uncalculating, and free ; it asks for no limit to its forgiveness, it strips off the second garment for the oppressor who seizes the first, and offers to go two miles when conscripted for one. 'The mere moralist makes nonsense of such teaching, for his dull literalism has not learnt the language of love.

This was the kind of teaching, given by act as well as speech, by personal influence even more than by word, with which Jesus endeavoured to train his few disciples to face with him the Cross. "Individual religious life was what he wanted to kindle and what he did kindle ; it is his peculiar greatness to have led men to God, so that they may thenceforth live their own life with Him."² Yet he did even more : what his followers felt was that he had not only brought men to God but that he had brought God to men. The Synoptic Gospels, Mark especially, seem to preserve a faithful record of the impression he made upon them, little coloured by later theological reflection. The outlines of the portrait they leave us blend into a consistent and intelligible whole. Jesus is there before us as a real man, subject to the conditions and limitations of a particular place and time, yet so far transcending them as to speak the language of universal truth, and to lay the foundations of a universal religious morality. His life of perfect love brought to men a new and adequate revelation of the nature and character of God. He felt himself to be fulfilling, in a deeper and truer sense than anyone else understood, his

¹ A. Clutton-Brock, *Studies in Christianity*, chapter iv.

² Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, pp. 11, 12.

people's expectation of a Divinely sent Deliverer. And this sense of Messianship rested on his inward knowledge of God as his Father, and on the consciousness of an unbroken filial relation to Him. In the clear light of this Divine communion he spoke and acted with the certitude and authority of one who saw the truth with unclouded vision. Because of the new experience he brought to men: the outward experience of his radiant life, and the inward knowledge of a blissful relation with God—they began to call him Lord and Saviour. He had done for their souls what only God could do, and henceforth they could only speak of him in terms that had hitherto been applied to God.¹ But he solemnly warns them that real belief in him is not in word but in deed, not in the profession of a dogma, but in the set of the will. "Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."² The only real Christians are those who live as Jesus lived, and are prepared if needful to die with him. Immediately, Mark tells us, after his first intimation that "the Son of man must suffer," "he called unto him the multitude, with his disciples, and said unto them, If any one would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me: for whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it."³ The Christian way is not self-denial for its own sake, but the achievement of true personality by a love in which self is forgotten. And self-abandoning love is possible for those to whom Jesus reveals the Father.

¹ This appears to me a truer way of stating the facts than to speak of the "claim" of Jesus to be Divine. In the Synoptics he does not claim honour for himself. His real "claim" is that men shall become what he has to give, come into a right relation with himself and therefore with God, and follow him faithfully at all costs to themselves.

² Matt. vii. 21, compare Luke vi. 46.

³ Mark viii. 34-35.

SUMMARY

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus were expecting a Kingdom or Reign of God, which they interpreted mainly as the vindication of His faithful people, and the destruction of their enemies and of the wicked among themselves. How far did John the Baptist, and Jesus himself, transcend these popular conceptions? Jesus used imagery familiar to his disciples, but in a deeper sense than they understood. For him the Kingdom was on its inner side a new experience of God, delivering men from self, and on its outer side a larger Family, in which God was to be Father and all men were to be brothers. It would come through a new manifestation of the character of God. The ideas of Judgment in the Synoptic Gospels, especially the first, probably misrepresent the real thoughts of Jesus, which are more truly suggested in the fourth Gospel. Divine "wrath" is a figure for the inevitable consequences of sin, and the Kingdom is deliverance from these consequences by a change in men's hearts, which would bring them into fellowship with God and with one another.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

IT seemed well in the first chapter to try to set forth the main outlines of the personality and teaching of Jesus in their broad and universal aspects, and to reserve for separate treatment their relation to the Jewish conception of the Kingdom of God. But, since this conception lies at the centre of his recorded teaching, and is vital to an understanding of the nature of Christianity, it must receive careful attention.

The expectation of a swiftly approaching Kingdom or Reign of God, which dominated the minds of many of the Jewish people while Jesus was quietly working as a carpenter at Nazareth, has I believe no parallel in human history. It is to be traced, of course, to the teaching of the Prophets, who, though their main function was to proclaim what they had discovered of the righteous character of God, of His will for men, and of the consequences of disobedience to it, always looked forward to a day when He should "reign in Zion." For the greater prophets human history, and especially the history of the chosen people, was the field in which God was working out, even through misfortune and disaster, a purpose of good for Israel. Some of them reached the conception of a larger purpose, which through Israel should issue in "blessing" for the whole world. From the appearance of the Book of Daniel (about 165 B.C.) onwards, Jewish literature mainly took the form of "Apocalypse," which differs from Prophecy in its deeper pessimism as to existing evils, and in the belief that only by a miraculous Divine intervention, with the

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complete overthrow of the existing world order, could these evils be overcome. The "Day of the Lord" which these writers expected would be above all a day of judgment for the wicked and of vindication for the righteous.

Dr. E. F. Scott notes three elements as persisting, in spite of many disappointed expectations, throughout the prophetic and Apocalyptic writings : (1) The *national* idea of the restoration of Israel to the Divine favour, and the fulfilment of God's promises to His people ; (2) the *ethical* belief in a coming reign of righteousness ; and (3) the *eschatological* expectation of the overthrow and destruction of the powers of wickedness, seen and unseen.¹ These elements no doubt appealed in differing degrees to different minds. The Zealots, of whom we catch glimpses in the Gospels, were fervent nationalists, ever ready to rise in revolt against the Roman oppressors ; the Pharisees, on the other hand, held that revolt would be useless till God should manifest Himself, and that the chief condition of His doing this was that His Law should be perfectly kept. There were also devout souls, like Joseph of Arimathea, who were "looking for the kingdom of God," whose thoughts centred mainly on the deliverance of God's people from all that rendered difficult the life of righteousness. Among these were the circle in which Jesus himself had been brought up—the "quiet in the land," whose thoughts are exquisitely rendered in the brief "canticles" in the first and second chapters of Luke.² In all circles it would seem that the expectation of a Day of Judgment, when the

¹ *The Kingdom and the Messiah*, pp. 20–24. The wicked powers that were "seen" were the enemies and persecutors of Israel, and the unfaithful among his own people ; the "unseen" were the evil spirits among the angelic beings with which Jewish imagination had filled the invisible world.

² Note especially Luke i. 74, 75 : "To grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days."

righteous should be set up and the wicked destroyed by Divine power, was an integral feature of the Apocalyptic hope.

The belief appears to have been general that God would set up His Kingdom through an agent—His chosen and “anointed” one, the Messiah. But in the days of Jesus confused and even conflicting ideas prevailed as to the nature and functions of the expected Deliverer. The mass of the people seem to have based their thoughts on the prophetic picture of a second David, a warrior chief like Judas Maccabeus, who would lead a victorious campaign against the oppressors. This idea appears whenever Jesus is hailed as the “Son of David”—a title which he never used, and which, as appears from the natural interpretation of his question in Mark xii. 35-37, “How is the Christ the son of David?” he definitely rejected. Many of the better read and more thoughtful Jews, on the other hand, who were familiar with one of the greatest of the apocalyptic writings, the Book of Enoch, were impressed by its presentation of the Messiah as a wholly supernatural being—“that Son of Man,” who had existed with God from all eternity, but was now about to be revealed from heaven. The demand of the Pharisees (to which sect most of the writers of Apocalypses belonged) that Jesus, if he claimed to be the Messiah, should work “a sign in heaven” (Mark viii. 11-13), shows the influence of this conception; and such words as Jesus himself is reported to have used when brought before the High Priest, “Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark xiv. 62), echo the language of the apocalyptic writers.¹

¹ Similar language occurs not only in the “little Apocalypse” in Mark xiii., especially verses 24-27, but incidentally in passages like Mark viii. 38, “Of him the Son of man also shall be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.”

Jesus undoubtedly used apocalyptic expressions, but did he hold the apocalyptic ideas of his contemporaries? Recent study of the Gospels has brought this question to the forefront. There has been a sharp controversy between "liberal" critics of the Gospels, like Harnack, who have thought of Jesus mainly as an ethical teacher whose mind worked in and upon the world of ordinary human experience, and "eschatologists" like Albert Schweitzer, who maintain that he took over with little modification the apocalyptic ideas of the more educated Jews—that he was a dreamer of dreams whose thoughts moved in a transcendental region, and that his ethical teaching is adapted merely to the brief interval that should elapse before the existing world order was overthrown and the New Age established.

Into this controversy there is no need to enter with any fullness. My own belief is strong that while the eschatologists have rendered a service to New Testament study by recalling attention to elements in the writers' thoughts that by previous critics had been too much overlooked, they have pushed their theory much too far. In England at any rate there has been a marked predominance of the older view, at least as regards the thought of Jesus himself concerning the nature of the Kingdom. There seems now to be a large measure of agreement that, while using some of the familiar imagery, he did not take over, but transcended and largely set aside, the apocalyptic ideas that were then current. There is also reason to believe that his thoughts on the Kingdom were imperfectly understood by his early followers, including the Synoptic evangelists, who appear to have reported some of his apocalyptic sayings without penetrating to the ideas that underlay them.¹

¹ This chapter was written before I had read *The Lord of Thought*, by two much-lamented authors, Miss Dougall and Rev. C. W. Emmet, in which this difficult subject is treated with much knowledge and

It may help us to form a judgment on this question if we glance first at the record of the work and preaching of John the Baptist. Our oldest Gospel does not represent him as explicitly proclaiming the approach of the Kingdom, but simply states that he came preaching "the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (Mark i. 4). It is Matthew who says that his message was "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2). Apart, however, from any direct statement, it is clear from both the first and third Gospels that it was on the Kingdom his thoughts were centred. "Even now the axe is laid unto the roots of the trees": the call is to repent, while yet there is time. The rite of baptism which he adopted (if he did not himself originate it) was in all probability intended to mark those who were ready for the New Age whenever it might appear.¹ The question of the people whether John were the Messiah (Luke iii. 15), and his answer, given by all the three Synoptists, that he was only the forerunner, point in the same direction. It would seem that his preaching brought to fever heat the popular belief in the near advent of the Kingdom.

But John's thoughts were clearly more in line with those of the ancient prophets than of the later apocalyptic writers. Above all he was a preacher of *righteousness*—of a righteousness not ceremonial but practical. Matthew tells us that both Pharisees and Sadducees were rebuked by him, perhaps for making inadequate distinction between the ceremonial and the moral requirements of the Law. He

discernment. The conclusion is reached and supported by a wealth of evidence, that the thought of Jesus concerning the real nature of the Kingdom, particularly in regard to the Judgment of the wicked, differed fundamentally from the notions prevalent among his contemporaries, but has been to a certain extent misrepresented by the evangelists, especially the first. The book deserves the careful attention of all students of the nature of Christianity. My own thoughts will be found below, pp. 47-52.

¹ See articles in the *Expository Times*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 38, 39, and 382, 383.

makes but little of the national hopes of the people: "Say not within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father"; and he does not rebuke the "publicans" for their anti-national occupation, merely warning them against the sin of extortion (Luke iii. 8-13). His warnings of coming Judgment are directed rather to the unrepentant among his own people than to their foreign oppressors. He knows that he is only the *herald* of the Kingdom and not its chief Figure—that, while he can baptize with water, Another must come to baptize with the Spirit.¹ It is clear that it was the ethical interest that dominated his thoughts about the Kingdom. "John came," Jesus is reported to have said, "*in the way of righteousness*" (Matt. xxi. 32). He brought the apocalyptic hope into close relation with the moral law; he may have seen that the expected Deliverer must be one who could not only teach men the way of righteousness but impart to them new spiritual power. Thus his view of the Kingdom transcended the crude apocalyptic dreams of the bulk of his contemporaries; he helped to deepen and moralize their hopes; and in this way he did indeed "make ready the way of the Lord," preparing the hearts of many for the work of the true Messiah.

If, then, John the Baptist was able in some measure to rise above the current notions, is it reasonable to suppose that the mind of his great Successor would be tied down by them? Careful study of the Gospels will, I believe, convince us of two things: first, that Jesus did expect

¹ So Mark i. 8. Wellhausen suggests that what John said was, "He shall baptize you with *fire*," in reference to the expected Judgment of the wicked, that Mark's version is an interpretation due to his taking the words as a reference to Jesus, and that the expression "The Holy Spirit and fire" in Matt. iii. 11 (= Luke iii. 16) is the result of a fusion of the two traditions. Even if this is true, it does not destroy our sense of the Baptist's ethical advance on the popular apocalyptic ideas. (See Manson, *Christ's View of the Kingdom of God*, p. 71.)

something wonderful to happen, and to happen soon ; and second, that what he looked for was in the main an *inner* change in men's hearts and lives, and not a spectacular outward event.

(1) He begins his ministry with the announcement that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark i. 14, 15), and puts the petition for its coming in the forefront of his model prayer (Matt. vi. 10). His frequent prediction of the "coming of the Son of man" has the same meaning. In sending out his disciples with haste and urgency to proclaim the near approach of the Kingdom, he tells them, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come" (Matt. x. 23).¹ What was it that he expected to occur? The statement has puzzled most commentators. I venture to suggest that Jesus already suspected that the Divine victory over evil, in the existing state of the Jewish mind, would only be achieved through his death, and that it is his death as the prelude to victory that he has in mind. He will not speak of it "openly" till he has trained and tested his disciples that they may be able to bear it ; and when, after receiving Peter's great confession, he at length does so, he finds them wholly unresponsive. Their minds are occupied with angry disputations as to which of them will have the best places in the "Kingdom" (Mark ix. 34, x. 37) ; and even after his resurrection they are represented as putting to him the pathetic question, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). That in his mind the coming of the kingdom was associated in the closest manner with his death is indicated by his words at the Last Supper, "I will no more drink of the

¹ So also Mark ix. 1 : "There be some of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power"—which in Matt. xvi. 28 appears in the form "till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark xiv. 25); and by those he uttered when challenged by the High Priest to declare himself as the Messiah (Mark xiv. 62).

(2) But there are many passages, in Luke especially, which (on the surface at least) are hard to reconcile with the idea of the coming of the Kingdom as an event rapidly approaching. The parable of the pounds (Luke xix. 11-27) is said to have been spoken "because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear"; its point is that the disciples are to *wait* for it and meanwhile use their powers to the best advantage. In Luke xvii. 22 they are warned that "the days will come when ye shall desire to see *one of the days* of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it"; and the following image of the Kingdom coming like lightning, shining from one end of the sky to the other, suggests that it would not be an event *in space*. So again the words before the High Priest, as reported with slight variations by Luke and Matthew, "*From henceforth* shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke xxii. 69 = Matt. xxvi. 64), indicate that it would not be a mere event *in time*. The outward and spectacular character which the popular belief attached to it is discounted in Luke xvii. 20, 21: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you."¹

This inward aspect of the Kingdom helps to explain the fact that Jesus is reported as sometimes speaking of it as not "coming" but as already come. "Many prophets

¹ ἐντός ὑμῶν may mean "in the midst of you." "But it is difficult to see how, on this interpretation, the words are in place. The natural phrase would have been ἐν ὑμῖν. On the other hand, if Jesus was emphasizing the inward reference of the Kingdom, the strong word ἐντός is explained." (Manson, *Christ's View of the Kingdom of God*, p. 82. Also *Expository Times*, January 1927, p. 187.)

and kings," he says, "have desired to see the things that *ye see*" (Luke x. 24); "If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then *is* the kingdom of God come upon you" (Luke xi. 20 = Matt. xii. 28). He seems often to have thought of the Kingdom not as a bare event breaking into human life from the outside, but rather as a living seed germinating and growing in the soil of human hearts. This is clearest in the little parable given by Mark alone (iv. 26-29), comparing the Kingdom to seed sown on the earth and springing up and bearing fruit, "first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear." With this go the two small parables in Matt. xiii. 31-33, where the Kingdom is likened to a grain of mustard-seed which grows into a tree, and to leaven which works in secret till the whole mass of dough is leavened. There is surely more in these expressions than vivid anticipation; they throw real light on what "the Kingdom" must have meant in the mind of Jesus. He passes from the outer to the inner aspect without any apparent feeling of contradiction or even contrast.¹ They reveal his conviction that a man has a responsible part to play in hastening or hindering the coming of the Kingdom. He meant, we may well believe, that God was only waiting till the requisite human conditions were fulfilled. The Pharisees imagined that God would send the Messiah as soon as His Law was perfectly kept. Jesus believed the Kingdom would come when men were perfectly attuned to the will

¹ "Nowhere does the *art* of his teaching appear more wonderful than in that fusion of the 'eschatological' with the 'progressive' which characterizes the parables of the kingdom." "It is remarkable how the popular ideas are all re-arranged and subordinated under the force of his own person and his deeper conception of God and God's relation to the world. The difference between his references to these ideas and the manner in which they are handled by others cannot be exaggerated. . . . In fact, it is his idea of God that must be used to discover his idea of the kingdom of God, and not *vice versa*." (*Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "Jesus Christ," Vol. VII, pp. 511 f.)

of God—full of faith and heartfelt obedience. In his own consciousness he knew that this condition was being fulfilled. He felt himself to be God's "Son," with no cloud of self-will hiding the Father's face. In him therefore the Kingdom was already breaking through. His evident power over the evil spirits confirmed the testimony of his own consciousness; and the fact that he was able to impart such powers to others showed him that the world was passing from the dominion of evil to the rule of God. "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven," he said (Luke x. 18), when the disciples reported to him that even the demons were subject to them in his name. In him, and in his little band of true followers, the Kingdom was already present, as the tree is present in the seed.

It seems clear, therefore, that in the thought of Jesus the Kingdom had its roots in the inner life of man, and could only come in its fullness as men were brought into a right inward relation to God. This gives point to the conditions of entering the Kingdom laid down at the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, in the well-known Beatitudes. "Blessed" are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven. The children of the Kingdom are they who share the spirit and character of Jesus. He is the Divinely appointed inaugurator of the Kingdom because he perfectly represents the character of God from whom it comes. What it means for him it must mean for them too. "Ye are they," he says, in one of his most poignant utterances, "that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke xxii. 28-30). At that table, he has just said, he is himself the waiter; and so the greatest among them would be the one

that took the lowliest place and served the most. The spirit of the Kingdom was the spirit that sought nothing for self, but forgot self in loving service of others, finding (as Jesus himself did) in lowliness the real exaltation. "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3); "Many shall be last that are first, and first that are last" (xix. 30); "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (xvi. 25). This insistence on a self-abandoning, humble and forgiving spirit is the most characteristic and pervasive feature of the teaching of Jesus concerning the nature of the Kingdom,¹ but it appears to have had little if any place in the popular thought of the day. It is all of one piece with his identification of the Messiah with the suffering Servant; the mind of the Master, during his last weeks with his disciples, would seem to have been absorbed in the effort to lead them to make that wholly unfamiliar identification—to see what it meant for themselves as well as for their Leader. It is here, above all, that the mind of Jesus rises altogether above the thought of his age.

While the Kingdom means the loss of the lower self, and with this the renunciation of all selfish and worldly aims, it also means the finding of the true self, and the discovery of God in personal experience. It is therefore in itself *Salvation*—a great positive joy, which far outweighs the loss. It is compared to treasure hidden in a field, and to a priceless pearl, which a man will gladly forfeit all he has to acquire (Matt. xiii. 44-46).

At the same time, the Kingdom means much more than the finding of *individual* salvation. In the Prophets it had meant the rule of God over a restored and purified nation; and some of them had reached the conception that Israel

¹ The references are too numerous to quote, and happily the words are familiar, however short we come of putting them into practice.

was to be restored and uplifted not for its own sake but for a world-wide service. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 6). And this corporate salvation, first for Israel and through the real Israel for all humanity, is certainly a dominant feature of the Kingdom as Jesus conceives it.¹ It is, in his thoughts, a *society* of men finding their true life and happiness under the rule of God. But that rule is not conceived under the usual category of dominion based on coercion. The Kingdom is not a Government system but a *Love* system; and of this the clearest proof is that God is hardly ever spoken of as the King. Almost everywhere he is the *Father*: "my Father," "your Father," "the Father." This higher thought of God alone explains the idea of the Kingdom in the mind of Jesus. It is a larger *Family* of men who recognize that God is their Father and that they are brothers one of another. It expresses a salvation which is not merely individual but social, embracing potentially all human souls, on the earth and beyond it. Since it is a love system, the Kingdom or Reign of God can only be brought into the world by the manifestation of love, and that without stint or measure.² The way of the Kingdom is the way of the Cross.

We shall be considering this aspect more fully in the next chapter; meanwhile we should note how profoundly this conception changed the whole outlook upon the nature of the expected Kingdom. According to the popular eschatology, as we have seen, one of the chief features of the New Age would be the judgment of the wicked. So

¹ It is remarkable that the first Gospel, which is strongly Jewish in tone, reporting that Jesus told the Syro-Phœnician woman that he "was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," also contains some of the clearest statements of his sense of a world-wide mission: for example, Matt. viii. 11, "Many shall come from the east and the west," etc.

² See above, Chapter I, pp. 26 f.

deeply was this belief rooted that it undoubtedly affected the minds of the evangelists, as indeed it has affected the minds of Christians ever since ; and it is here above all that we must be prepared to find them imperfectly apprehending our Lord's meaning. The idea that the final answer of God to human evil will be to overwhelm it with supernatural force has done more than anything else to obscure the real nature and meaning of Christianity. It is inconsistent with the revelation brought by Jesus of the universal and limitless love of the Father in heaven ; of His way of overcoming evil, not by force but by love to the uttermost ; and of the ideal unity and universal brotherhood of all mankind. These, as we have seen, are the essentials of Christianity ; but even the New Testament as we have it has beclouded the principles enunciated by Jesus through mixing up with them elements derived from alien sources.

It may be well to look into this matter with some care. The Synoptic Gospels differ considerably from one another in the prominence they give to the element of Judgment. In Mark (apart from the "little Apocalypse" in chapter xiii. announcing forthcoming woes, which is believed by many to embody an early Jewish document) there appear to be only four passages in which the Divine judgment on sin is alluded to.¹ All these appear in Matthew, and three of them in Luke. In the first Gospel there are at least eighteen other passages of a similar character, of which seven only are found in Luke.² The fierce denuncia-

¹ Mark iii. 29 = Matt. xii. 31 = Luke xii. 10 ; Mark viii. 38 = Matt. xvi. 27 = Luke ix. 26 ; Mark ix. 43-48 = Matt. v. 29, 30, and xviii. 7-9 (not in Luke) ; and Mark xii. 9 = Matt. xxi. 41 = Luke xx. 16.

² Matt. v. 22 ; vii. 19 ; vii. 23 (= Luke xiii. 27) ; viii. 12 (= Luke xiii. 28) ; x. 28 (= Luke xii. 5) ; x. 33 (= Luke xii. 9) ; xi. 22 (= Luke x. 14) ; xii. 36, xii. 41, 42 (= Luke xi. 32) ; xiii. 30 ; xiii. 41, 42 ; xiii. 49, 50 ; xviii. 34, 35 ; xxii. 7 ; xxiii. 33 ; xxiv. 51 (= Luke xii. 46) ; xxv. 10 ; xxv. 46.

tion of the Scribes and Pharisees, which occupies nearly the whole of Matt. xxiii., is given by Mark in three quiet verses (xii. 38-40). The lesson drawn from the withered fig-tree in Mark xi. 20-25 is not, as might have been expected, judgment, but (irrelevant as this looks on a superficial view) faith and forgiveness. If the second Gospel is thus decidedly more benignant than the first, so is the third. In Luke there are, I believe, only four passages referring to the punishment of the wicked which are not found in Matthew ¹: three of these are from his special source,² and the fourth (xix. 14, 27) consists apparently of portions of a lost parable which has been fused with the parable of the pounds. Luke puts at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus the visit to Nazareth, with the announcement of his "programme" from Isa. lxi. 1, 2. Here he most significantly ends the quotation with the words "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," and does *not* read the clause that follows, "and the day of vengeance of our God" (iv. 19). It is Luke who gives us the principle of Divine justice in the words "He that knew not his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (xii. 47, 48). Both Luke and Matthew record the lyrical outburst of Jesus over Jerusalem—"How often would I have gathered thy children together" (Matt. xxiii. 37-39 = Luke xiii. 34, 35); but it is Luke who tells of the other occasion on which he "wept over" Jerusalem because she knew not "the time of her visitation" (xix. 41-44). It is Luke who records the story of the penitent thief, and the prayer of Jesus for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (xxiii. 34, 39-43).³

¹ Luke xiii. 3, 5; xiii. 9; xvi. 23; xix. 14, 27.

² Called by Canon Streeter "L." (See above, p. 16.)

³ J. A. Findlay says that Luke provides us with a transition to the ideas characteristic of the fourth Gospel: "Judgment tends with him to

This little investigation seems to prove that the personality of the different evangelists is a factor of some importance as affecting what they record of the teaching of Jesus, and the way in which they record it. I believe the fact that "the Gospel according to Matthew" stands first in our New Testament, and is probably the most widely read of all the Gospels, has caused Christians from the first century onwards to give exaggerated emphasis to the element of judgment and punishment as one of the main features of the Kingdom of God. This emphasis is largely a legacy from the Jewish Apocalyptic, which finds its extreme expression in the Book of Revelation, where Divine vengeance is the prevailing theme. With the Synoptic Gospels before us it would certainly be contrary to sound principles of criticism to attempt to eliminate it from the teaching of Jesus. Yet there appear to be strong grounds for maintaining that it has been generally misunderstood, and that this misunderstanding has always been a grave hindrance to Christianity. Half our theologies have been built up on the belief that God is bound to take deliberate vengeance on the impenitent and the unbelievers, and the many attempts to reconcile this vengeance with His universal love and Fatherhood have never been satisfactory.

It may be that the fourth Gospel gives us the clue to a deeper and sounder interpretation of the real meaning of Jesus when he speaks of "Judgment." Written mainly for Greek Christians in days when the expectation of an immediate Parousia was declining, that Gospel is largely free from apocalyptic imagery. The "coming of the Son

become rather a process than a set occasion" (*Jesus as they saw Him*, p. 191). C. W. Emmet in *The Lord of Thought* (pp. 293-296) shows by a careful investigation that we cannot attribute Luke's omission of many of the more lurid passages to a Greek bias against eschatology. He believes that Luke gives a "truer report of Christ's teaching" on these matters than does Matthew.

of man " is quietly transmuted into a spiritual experience—the presence with his people of the living Spirit of their Lord.¹ Perhaps the writer, while freely interpreting and idealizing the actual teaching of Jesus, has penetrated more deeply than the earlier evangelists into its inner meaning. When he speaks of Judgment as if it were an impersonal or automatic process like the light separating black from white, or a man being judged by " the word that I spoke "—the chances he has had and missed—does not this indicate that Jesus (at least in the thought of the writer) recognized the great law of the universe that defiance of its order brings inevitable nemesis, that persistence in self-will means alienation from goodness and from God, that (in Paul's phrase) " he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ? " Of course, this elemental law of the universe is the law of God ; but we need not attribute it to His personal act or will. Perhaps, as Miss Dougall suggests, the evil consequences of sin are as hateful to God as is sin itself, and what the Kingdom offers is deliverance from them through a prior deliverance from sin itself.² Was it this inevitable process of cause and effect that was hinted at by our Lord when he spoke (as Matthew chiefly reports him) of the unquenchable fire, the weeping and gnashing of teeth, the worm that dieth not, the shut door, and the age-long punishment ? From all these things it was his function, as the bringer of the Kingdom, to deliver

¹ John xiv. 16–20. For a discussion of this subject see an article by the present writer on " The Eschatology of the Fourth Gospel " in *The Expository Times* (1917), Vol. XXVIII, p. 308. The word " Kingdom " only occurs in the conversations of Jesus with Nicodemus and with Pilate (iii. 3, 5, xviii. 36). Sayings that echo the earlier conception are i. 51, v. 28, 29 ; and in the Appendix (xxi. 22) the risen Jesus speaks of his " coming." The thought of Judgment is for the most part transformed, and appears no longer as an event in the future but as an eternal function of the Logos, who as the " Light " ever separates good from evil, and does this most of all when manifested in a radiant human life (iii. 19, 20, compare viii. 15, 16, and xii. 47, 48).

² See *The Lord of Thought*, especially chapters xiii–xvii.

men, by delivering them from the sin that separates from God.

If this is a possible interpretation, the teaching concerning the Kingdom becomes a consistent whole. When the Father of all sets up His Kingdom on the earth, it will not be with the purpose of condemning men to destruction but of delivering them from it.¹ He will not force their wills, even by threats of impending doom, but will win them by love to the uttermost. He will Himself, in the person of His Son, suffer for and with them in the mighty struggle with evil. Love is the last appeal, the final reaction of the Father against the moral evil in men's hearts. Those who reject it He will never overwhelm with irresistible might, but will suffer with them until they repent. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—this prayer must surely be answered. Jesus overcomes his adversaries not by destroying them but by converting them—as his living Spirit converted Saul of Tarsus. In the fourth Gospel Jesus looks forward to the time when even his enemies will acknowledge him (John viii. 28), and when he will "draw all men unto himself" (xii. 32).

This is the final difference between the Kingdom as Jesus conceived it and the Kingdom of popular Jewish thought; and, as we have seen, it all follows from the deep insight with which Jesus found in the suffering Servant the picture of the true Messiah. Instead of conquering armies, we have twelve men in a garden with two swords, and the champion disarmed by the Leader; instead of a miraculous descent from heaven we have One "lifted up" on a Cross; instead of the destruction of the wicked with flaming fire we have "Father, forgive them."

Yet we should be wrong in concluding that Jewish

¹ John xii. 47: "I came not to judge the world but to save the world."

Apocalyptic was nothing but fantasy and fierce delusion. It represents the best that Jewish thought could do in wrestling with the eternal problem of evil in the world ; and it reached the truth that evil is not the final word of this strange universe, but that behind the evil stands God, waiting till men will permit Him to change the discord into harmony. If it mistook the Divine method of overcoming evil, it sustained the faith of thousands that evil will be overcome, and that for dealing with it God has limitless resources, which wait only on man's faith and obedience.



SUMMARY

The Cross must not be regarded as predetermined by God in such a sense that the Jews who brought it about were acting under any sort of Divine compulsion, for Jesus desired with great intensity that they should receive his message. He was amazed at their hardness of heart, and recognized that only through a new moral dynamic could such hardness be overcome. His anguish points to his insight into human sin and his sense of oneness with men in their alienation from God. His assurance of victory through death was the outcome of faith rather than of knowledge. The significance of his resurrection is spiritual rather than physical: the need was that the disciples should be absolutely convinced that their Master was alive and still carrying on his work of establishing the Kingdom. For us its primary religious value is that it vindicates the way of the Cross, alike for Jesus and for his followers.

CHAPTER III

THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION

WE have seen reason to believe that very early in his career Jesus had discovered in the suffering Servant of Jehovah the true picture of the Messiah and his work ; and that consequently, when he began to think of himself in Messianic terms, he foresaw that his own course would in all probability be one of rejection at the hands of his people, terminating possibly in a violent death. The Kingdom as he came to conceive it was to be a kingdom of Love, and could not therefore be brought into human history by the display of power, but only by the manifestation of perfect love and self-surrender. Does this mean that he thought of his death as predetermined in the counsels of God, and therefore necessary in the sense that it could not fail to occur ? Many Christians have held this view ; but it is attended by very serious difficulties, which it may be well to deal with at the outset of this chapter.

The evangelists, especially the first, frequently speak of events in the life of Jesus as occurring " that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets." The modern mind tends to interpret this as meaning that in their thoughts the event was bound to happen, because it was foretold and was therefore designed by God ; and the inference is often drawn that in such a case the persons who brought the event to pass were not free agents, being compelled to their action by some Divine decree.

It should be noted that the Jewish mind, which was not naturally philosophical, did not draw this inference. It recognized contingency, even in events which were sup-

posed to have been foretold through Divine inspiration. By repentance and amendment, a doom thought to have been pronounced by God could be averted; even the prophets do not hesitate to speak of Jehovah as changing His mind.¹ Probably Matthew, when he uses the phrase "that it might be fulfilled," means little more than we should express by saying, "so that it was fulfilled."

We are here inevitably brought up against the age-long question whether Divine foreknowledge can be reconciled with human free-will. The Jews, and Jesus himself as he is reported, do not seem to have been troubled by this question. Events are spoken of as predetermined, and yet the actors in them are clearly regarded as free to choose between good and evil, and as blameworthy if they make the evil choice. "The Son of man indeed goeth, even as it has been written of him; but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed" (Matt. xxvi. 24).² If we cannot rest where they did—if it seems, as it does to many who have given earnest thought to the matter, that we must choose between Divine determination and human free-will, because both cannot be true together—then clearly the former must give way; for we know our own minds better than we know the mind of God. In the question that is now before us, we cannot entertain a theory that would reduce a great part of the tenderest words and acts of Jesus to a species of play-acting. If we say that the death of Jesus was "necessary," and that he himself frequently, at any rate, expected it to occur, this does not mean that it was bound to happen in the same sense as this is true of an eclipse of the sun or the appearance of a comet. It was the work of free human agents in a

¹ For example, Amos vii. 3, Jer. xviii. 8, Jonah iii. 10, Zech. viii. 14-15.

² Similarly in Acts ii. 23 Peter is made to say that while Jesus was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," yet it was "by the hands of lawless men" that he was crucified and slain.

certain condition of moral and spiritual enlightenment or darkness ; and it could only be foretold with the measure of doubt that must always accompany prediction of the actions of persons who are really free. Jesus himself, with his penetrating insight into the spiritual condition of his people, was doubtless convinced that his life and work on earth, in face of the existing circumstances, was likely to end in apparent disaster ; and he laid his plans accordingly. But there is no sign whatever in the Gospels that he regarded these conditions—the spiritual blindness and hardness of the Jewish authorities—as inevitable ; still less that he attributed them to the will and purpose of his Father. He did his best to overcome them ; and finding them invincible he followed the path of obedience, even to the Cross.

Examination of the Gospel narratives must convince us that Jesus did foresee and foretell his probable death, and yet that he consistently acted in the belief that his people could, and ought to, receive his message. How soon in his career the foreboding of death became a settled conviction we cannot say. Our earliest Gospel tells us that he did not clearly warn his disciples of what he felt to be impending till he had won from Peter the confession "Thou art the Messiah." From this time he "began" to teach them that "the Son of man must suffer" ;¹ and it would seem that his most absorbing anxiety during the last weeks of his life on earth was whether their faith in him would be strong enough to survive the coming shock. At times his own confidence in ultimate victory seems almost to have given way.² He knew that he was faced

¹ Mark viii. 30, 31. The warning is repeated in Mark ix. 31 and x. 33, 34. The only definite intimation before that time is in Mark ii. 20, "days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them"—possibly ante-dated by the evangelist.

² Note Luke xxii. 37, "The things concerning me have come to an end," and xviii. 8, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I suggested above that the "coming" in such passages is a veiled allusion to death as the prelude to victory (see Chapter II, p. 41).

not only by the difficulty of so reaching the hearts of his people that they would recognize and accept as true his thoughts concerning the Kingdom and the Messiah, which conflicted with many of their most cherished beliefs, and of convincing them that the evils from which they suffered could be overcome by a policy of love and forgiveness ; but also by the consequences of his own refusal to "play for safety" in any direction. On the one hand, he could not avoid antagonizing the Pharisees by the freedom with which he treated their sacred Law, as in the matters of the Sabbath and of ceremonial cleanness (Mark ii. 28, vii. 19, R.V.), and the Sadducees by his bold challenge of their authority when he drove the money-changers from the temple (Mark xi. 15-18). Many of the people doubtless welcomed and applauded in their hearts this defiance of an authority which they felt to be oppressive and corrupt. Yet, on the other hand, by refusing absolutely to become a political leader, Jesus forfeited the popular support which alone, if the authorities rejected him, could have made his position safe. He allowed John the Baptist to be beheaded in prison, without making any attempt to deliver him. What heart-searching must have arisen among his most intimate followers from this apparent unwillingness or inability to rescue his friend, it is not difficult to imagine.

There can be little doubt that the tragic end of his great forerunner confirmed his anticipation of a speedy death for himself also. "Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them" (Matt. xvii. 12, 13). The prophets in their day had been beaten and killed, and a like rejection surely awaited the "beloved Son" of the Father (Mark xii. 1-12). "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it hath been determined ; but woe unto that man through whom he is betrayed" (Luke xxii. 22). The betrayal of Jesus to the priests by one of his nearest

friends brought the crisis to a head, and it is closely followed by the agony in Gethsemane.

So much for his foresight of the Cross ; now for the other side, the evident belief of Jesus that his message might, and ought to, be accepted. There is no sign whatever in the Gospels of the unreality that must have fatally weakened his appeals if he knew that they would inevitably be rejected. He begins by calling his people, as John had done, to repent because the Kingdom of God is at hand. Can he possibly have known for certain that they would not and could not repent ? He is "grieved" at the "hardening of the hearts" of those who will not admit that an act of healing is good, even if it be done on the Sabbath day (Mark iii. 5). He rebukes the cities of Galilee for their non-repentance, and says it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them (Matt. xi. 20-24). He " marvels " because of the unbelief of his own townspeople (Mark vi. 6). He weeps over Jerusalem because she has not known the things that belong to peace (Luke xix. 41, 42). The fig-tree that bears no fruit is given another chance (Luke xiii. 6-9) ; another fig-tree is only destroyed when it proves hopeless (Mark xi. 20).¹ The stern denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees for their "hypocrisy," and the terrible warning to those who said he had "an unclean spirit," would be unjust unless these were wilfully sinning against the light they had. How grievously he must have mourned over the hardness and treachery of Judas—a man whom surely he would never have chosen unless he had believed in him—we can gather from the brief hints of the evangelists.

It is, as I have already suggested, absolutely vital to avoid a theory of the necessity of the Cross which

¹ For suggestive comments on this part of Mark's Gospel see J. R. Coates, *The Christ of Revolution*, pp. 90-95.

resolves all the tender appeals and solemn warnings of Jesus into play-acting; and which logically involves the grotesque belief that if his people had responded to his teaching, as he clearly desired, and as he must have believed they could, then neither they nor anyone else could have been saved.¹ It may well be questioned whether we know enough of the mind of God to seek *there* for the "necessity" of the Cross. What is revealed to us in the life and death of Jesus is a glimpse of the Divine purpose—a purpose not to punish but to save. Jesus does not deal speculatively with the problem of evil in the world, but he never, in any recorded utterance, traces it to his Father. He knew that his death, if it came, would be due to the evil that was in the world—the selfish interests and blindness of men and the hardness of their hearts. It was for the very purpose of delivering men from these evils that he had come. He seems to have seen, dimly it may be and perhaps not continuously, that, in the struggle in which he knew himself to be engaged, should men reject all other appeals, God would not even "spare His own Son"; and to have trusted that even this great rejection, an act in itself wholly evil, would, through his perfect obedience, even unto death, be turned to account for the furtherance of God's saving purpose.²

¹ It is interesting, but perhaps unprofitable, to conjecture what the course of history might have been if Jesus had not been rejected by the Jews. It may be that God could then have used them for the salvation of the whole world, that the Kingdom might have come speedily, that the old civilization need not have been destroyed by barbarians. (See Cadoux, *Essays in Christian Thinking*, pp. 124, 125.) As a rule speculations of this kind are vain because historical conditions are so complex that we cannot envisage them completely. When we try to guess what would have happened if one of them had been different we may easily miss important factors and reach a wrong conclusion. Perhaps, from a psychological point of view, the "necessity" of the death of Jesus amounts to this: that if men's hearts had been less hard, a less moving appeal than the sacrifice of God's own Son might have met the case.

² This seems to be the truth underlying the impossible idea entertained by many of the early Fathers that in the Cross Satan was outwitted

As the opposition deepened, as the blindness and hardness of the Jewish people and their rulers became more manifest, as he found his own trusted friend intriguing with them, Jesus became more than ever convinced that, having done all he could, he must now yield up his life as a final appeal. There are hints that he felt the Father had in reserve some new dynamic which could even change the great refusal into the great surrender. "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God," he had said, concerning the difficulty of rich men entering the kingdom of God (Mark x. 23-27). Possible, he surely meant, with One who will never use Divine power to coerce the wills of men, but will seek ever to win them with love to the uttermost. Preaching had failed; the Kingdom as he presented it was not attractive enough to draw to the Father worldly and self-complacent souls; but surely they would not close their hearts for ever to the appeal of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13), and his friends were the whole race of men.

It can hardly be by accident that all the four evangelists have devoted a large part of their brief stories of Jesus to his last few days on earth—to the circumstances preceding and attending his crucifixion. They must have felt intuitively that they were here recording something of supreme importance for humanity. The Cross of Christ always has been, and always will be, the centre of Christianity—however imperfect have been the attempts of Christians to understand and set forth its true significance. Jesus seems to have made little effort to explain to his disciples the meaning of his death—partly, no doubt, because they were wholly unable to conceive that the Messiah could really

by God. It entails the paradox that evil can only be turned into good on the condition that it is always treated as evil and not as "good in disguise"—that it is not accepted, but overcome.

die at the hands of his opponents ; but also, probably, because he did not always see it clearly himself. It may have been only by glimpses that he saw the purpose of the suffering through which he had to pass ; had he always seen it clearly he would not have suffered to the utmost. Even in the garden he prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from him—he cannot have been completely sure that the Father might not have some other way of establishing the Kingdom, that before it was too late his people might not even yet repent. But a horror of great darkness was upon him, in the night of Gethsemane and when he uttered the cry of desolation on the Cross ; and of no facts in his inner life can we be more certain than of this. No theological theory of their Master's person or work would have led his disciples to have imagined such anguish if they had not witnessed it. Into its hidden depths we can scarcely penetrate ; yet it is surely right that we should try to do so. It cannot have been mere fear of physical death, nor of the pain and degradation of the Cross ; nor is it sufficiently to be accounted for by the overthrow of his hope that his people would repent, or even by the fear that the faith of the disciples would be finally shattered and all his work frustrated. In those last hours, it may be, he felt that he was called to pass through the experience of that servant of Jehovah with whom all along he had identified himself, whose " life was made an offering for sin." ¹ He was identifying himself so completely with sinful men as to feel in his own experience that which only the purest-hearted can feel in its depth of utter agony—what sin means in its alienation of the soul from God. As Moses had prayed, " If now thou

¹ Isa. liii. 10. The last few verses of Isa. liii. are corrupt in all our MSS. and we cannot be sure what was originally written. The LXX version is different ; but it seems probable that the Hebrew Bible in the time of Jesus read very much as ours does to-day.

wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”; as Paul exclaimed that he “could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren’s sake”;¹ so the Master himself would be one with his brethren, even if, in utter bewilderment, he felt that this might sever his communion with God. We cannot for one moment suppose that the Father’s love was really withdrawn from him, or that it ever went out to him more abundantly than in this hour of his supreme obedience. Doubtless God was nearest to him when He seemed farthest away. What the loss of consciousness of his Father’s presence must have meant to him we can but dimly imagine, for we have not lived,

¹ Exod. xxxii. 32, Rom. ix. 3. Other saints of God have passed through experiences which perhaps may throw light on that of Jesus himself. John Woolman, the Quaker, who did more than anyone else in America to arouse his people to the wrong of Slavery, records in his journal that in a time of illness and delirium he had forgotten his own name. “I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be, and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours.” Elsewhere he prays: “O Lord my God! the amazing horrors of darkness were gathered around me and covered me all over, and I saw no way to go forth. I felt the depth and extent of the misery of my fellow-creatures, separated from the Divine harmony, and it was heavier than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it. I lifted my hand, I stretched out my arm, but there was none to help me; I looked round about and was amazed.” (See *John Woolman, His Life and our Times*, by W. Teignmouth Shore, pp. 231, 265.)

I do not think that anything less than the thought that Jesus was consciously making himself one with sinful men will do justice either to the facts recorded or to the place they have always held in Christian experience. An able attempt has recently been made (by Dr. A. T. Cadoux, in *Essays in Christian Thinking*, pp. 132–137), to explain the agony of Jesus as due to the failure of his plans, and his doubt whether his failure was not in some sense God’s failure. In my judgment this may well have been a contributing factor, but not the deepest. It hardly allows a place for the conviction which (to me at least) it is certain that Jesus held, that his suffering and death would lead to eventual victory and to the coming of the Kingdom. The Gospel of Luke is the one that goes deepest into the story of the Cross, which there ends on the note of confidence, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke xxiii. 46).

as he had, continuously in the light of God. Even to the best of Christians communion with God is but a feeble flicker compared with the sunshine in which Jesus had always lived. But just as a true mother feels the shame and degradation of her wayward son far more bitterly than he feels it himself, so the heart of Jesus felt, as none else could feel it, the last consequence of human sin, the sense of separation from God.

And so the Cross must be the way to the Kingdom. If men are to be effectually brought to repentance and reconciled to God, these things at least need to be stabbed into their consciousness: the moral loathsomeness of sin; the Divine holiness that inevitably condemns it; the outreaching Love that forgives it and restores; and the perfect human obedience that has been and can be rendered. The Cross of Christ is unique as a moral dynamic because it fills all these needs.

But the Cross was not the end of Jesus. Had it been so, it would have been a calamity of unrelieved and unexampled gloom. Jesus had coupled with the three warnings about his death, which he addressed to his disciples, the prediction that he would "after three days rise again."¹ The question may well be asked, If he clearly and confidently foresaw his resurrection, why should he be so horror-stricken with the thought of approaching death? I confess I see no answer to this question, if the predictions of resurrection were really as clear and definite as in the Gospels they are represented to have been.² That Jesus

¹ Mark viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 34, as before.

² "It has been generally taken for granted that Jesus died in the full assurance of winning by his death all for which he had lived and died. The assumption involves a psychological impossibility: the man who dies knowing that his death will certainly win for him what is dearer to him than life dies happy in soul, however tormented in body." (Cadoux, *Essays in Christian Thinking*, p. 134.)

believed that his death would not only not prevent but would make possible the establishment of the Kingdom of God in men's hearts seems certain ; and this must have meant for him the assurance that in some way, perhaps undefined in his consciousness, he would be victorious even over death. If he had glimpses of the triumph he was to win through suffering, he would certainly share them with disciples whom he desired with the utmost longing to cheer and strengthen. But the precise words in which the forecast is reported ("after three days rise again") may be due to their later experience. His anguish in the prospect of death is undoubted ; the precise words in which he spoke of coming victory are much less certain. His assurance of triumph was faith, not knowledge ; as is the Christian's assurance of a life beyond the grave.

The meaning and place of the Resurrection of Jesus I take to be that, if the Kingdom of God were to be set up in the world, it was necessary that his disciples should receive an absolute assurance that their Master's career was not ended by the Cross—that he had triumphed even over death. What precisely happened perhaps we shall never know for certain ; the records are confused and contradictory. Mark's story of the Resurrection is missing ; verses 9–20 of his last chapter were added, probably in the second century, by another hand. Luke represents all the appearances of Jesus as occurring in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and apparently on the first day ; there is no place in his narrative for the journey to Galilee of which Matthew tells. The fourth Gospel, apart from the Appendix (chapter xxi.) also confines the appearances to the vicinity of Jerusalem. If this were all the evidence we possessed, we might well be inclined to doubt whether it would be sufficient to establish so momentous an event as the Resurrection. But our earliest witness is the Apostle Paul, who (writing to the Corinthians before A.D. 60)

gives a careful summary of the evidence as he had received it (1 Cor. xv. 3-8)—mentioning appearances to Peter, to “the twelve,” to above 500 brethren at once, to James, and to all the Apostles; and he adds his own vision of the risen Lord on the Damascus road. This is weighty evidence, and we must add to it the unanimous testimony of the Gospels that the tomb was found empty, with the obvious fact that from some cause the shattered faith of the disciples was speedily restored, and that they faced persecution with the confident assertion that their Master, having been raised from the dead, was after all the Messiah of his people. The most distinctive feature of the primitive Christian Church was its absolute certainty of the living presence of the Spirit of Jesus; and this fact must have had some adequate historical cause. Something must have happened to revive and reanimate their faith.

“*Something* must have happened”—but what was it? The reanimation of the physical body? This has been the general belief of the Christian Church, and anyone who doubted it has been regarded as an unbeliever. But the careful study of human personality, in its abnormal and supernormal manifestations, carried on in recent years by the Society for Psychical Research and others, suggests a theory less loaded with difficulties and more in accordance with the bulk of the evidence. It has been proved that some persons of rare “psychical” endowment have succeeded, by an effort of concentrated attention and will, in projecting a “veridical hallucination” of their presence to others at a distance; and the appearance of “wraiths” of persons at the moment of death or severe distress is not very uncommon. It is now becoming widely held that the Resurrection of Jesus was a fact of this order. Most of the evidence points in this direction. The difficulty of recognition is mentioned more than once (Matt. xxviii. 17, Luke xxiv. 16, John xx. 15). Jesus

vanishes from sight (Luke xxiv. 31), and apparently passes through closed doors (John xx. 19, 26).¹ Paul, as we have noted, seems to have thought his vision of the risen Jesus to be as "real" as his appearances to others. The theory that the appearances were psychical rather than physical implies that Jesus, a living personality, was purposely impressing his real presence on the minds of the disciples in such a way that they seemed to see (and Thomas possibly to touch) his body. It preserves what is after all the essential thing—that Jesus was living after death, and actively at work carrying forward the great task on which he had previously been engaged. It fulfils the paramount need of the situation—that for the accomplishment of his work of setting up the Kingdom the faith of the disciples should be restored by indubitable evidence that death had not ended his career.²

But, if the appearances of Jesus after death were of this kind, what is the significance of the empty tomb? The answer is, I suppose, that it falls out of the primary into a secondary place. The average Jewish mind, I gather, could not conceive of continued personality apart from a physical body. If the belief in immortality meant for them the resurrection of the body,³ however this may

¹ The only passage that necessarily suggests an actual physical body is Luke xxiv. 39-43, where Jesus speaks of having flesh and bones, and eats before his disciples. On the "psychical" theory we can, of course, only suppose that this occurrence has been misreported.

² A distinguished scholar has recently written: "I think we must distinguish between the Resurrection in the sense of the continued activity of Christ after his death, in the full reality and power of his personal life, and the reanimation of his dead body. The Resurrection in the first sense is essential to the Christian faith. The experience of the disciples after the Crucifixion, those appearances which convinced them that Jesus was alive, can have been no subjective illusion; they must have been a real manifestation of himself by the living Christ. But the truth of this does not seem to me to depend on whether the body taken down from the Cross was reanimated or not." (Edwyn Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 248.)

³ Note the strange passage about the rising of the dead bodies of "many of the saints that had fallen asleep" in Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

seem to us like crass materialism, it was at least a great advance on the older conception of the survival of disembodied spirits in the unreal and shadowy world of Sheol, which the Jews shared with most of the pagans. In that gloomy abode the "spirits" of the departed possessed few or none of the attributes of personality—they could not even enjoy communion with God.¹ The belief in "resurrection," to which the more spiritually-minded Jews in our Lord's day had advanced, meant the assurance that personality would be restored, with full powers of self-expression and fellowship. Given this belief, the disappearance of the dead body of Jesus would seem to have been necessary to assure these pious Jews that he was actually alive and in full possession of his personal powers. It seems to me therefore extremely probable that something apparently "miraculous" did happen to the body—that it was not stolen, nor even lost (by some mistake about the tomb). It must be remembered that there were powerful interests that, when the disciples began to preach his resurrection, would have led his opponents to spare no pains to find and produce the body, if they could. May not the command of his spirit over matter, shown in his so-called miracles, have been sufficient to meet the necessities of the case by the absorption, or "dematerialization," of his physical body?

This is speculation, and happily it is not the heart of the matter. "Peter," it has been acutely said, "believed because he had found a living Jesus, not because he could not find a dead one."² It may well be, indeed, that Peter's Jewish "materialism" was such that the production (had that been possible) of the dead body of Jesus would have destroyed his belief in the Resurrection; but it is

¹ Psal. lxxxviii. 10-12, Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19.

² Foakes-Jackson and Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 303.

not so certain that it would have destroyed the faith of Paul. Paul was as sure as any of the Apostles that he had seen Jesus alive after his death; he never mentions the empty tomb; and one of his axioms was that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv. 50). The "spiritual body" in which he imagines resurrection to take place seems nearer to what we should call psychical than physical. Whatever may have happened to the material body, the Resurrection in its essence was not a mere event in physical history, but one of profound *religious* significance—and one which only religious experience could properly appreciate. In Acts x. 40, 41, Peter is represented as saying that the risen Jesus was "made manifest, *not to all the people*, but unto witnesses chosen before of God." The natural meaning of this is that, in the thought of the writer at any rate, only prepared minds and anointed eyes could perceive the risen Jesus. What renewed the faith of the disciples was not the bare physical marvel that a dead body had come to life again, but the knowledge that their beloved Leader and Friend and Teacher was living and active still, carrying forward his work of bringing in the Kingdom. Professor Harnack says that "No appearances of the Lord would permanently have convinced them of his life, if they had not possessed in their hearts the impression of his person."¹ Their conviction that Jesus was alive was immensely strengthened by their experience at Pentecost, which we shall be considering later.

It is only from the religious standpoint that the significance of the Resurrection can be rightly understood, or even the evidence for it duly weighed. Perhaps we may find in it the supreme manifestation of that deep law of the spiritual life, which (as we have seen) receives its highest

¹ *History of Dogma*, Vol. I, p. 86 n.

illustration in the experience of Jesus—the law that associates exaltation with lowliness and self-surrender. The author of the fourth Gospel suggests this law when he writes of the “lifting up” of Jesus.¹ As the humble self-identification of Jesus with his sinful countrymen at his baptism was followed by the “descent of the Spirit” upon him; as his full dedication of himself to his Father’s will, even should this lead him to the Cross, was followed by the Transfiguration; so the Cross itself was followed by the Resurrection. Perhaps we may speak of it as the Divine response, according to a spiritual law which we can but dimly conceive, to the perfect obedience and faith of Jesus. When the spirit of man is fully dedicated to, and infused by, the Spirit of God, it may express itself in ways that transcend the normal limitations set by the physical body. We cannot put limits to such higher expression, excepting this: that it seems to be God’s way not to transcend the “laws” of his ordinary working except for some great and necessary purpose. Most of the “miracles” recorded of the saints are weak evidentially, and nearly all lack *cogency*: no adequate reason for their occurrence can be perceived, as it can in most of the “mighty works” of Jesus, and especially in the crowning event of the Resurrection. It was not only that Jesus, by manifesting his living presence after death, restored the faith of his disciples and enabled them to carry forward the work he had come to do. The Resurrection was and remains the vindication of the way of the Cross, the supreme proof that for all humanity it is the way of life; that, while to men it appears foolishness, it is the “wisdom” of God; that there are no limits to what God can do in and through those whose wills are perfectly surrendered, and whom He can

¹ John iii. 14, viii. 28, xii. 32. The primary reference is no doubt to the Cross, but the word used is the same as that translated “exalt” in Acts ii. 33 and v. 31. Compare also Paul’s words in Phil. ii. 8, 9.

fill with His own Spirit. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be."¹

According to Matthew's story, confirmed by the last verses of the original Mark, the disciples returned to Galilee at the bidding of the risen Jesus through the women who had seen him, and there he appeared to them all. If the Appendix to the fourth Gospel is historical, those who had been fishermen returned to their former occupation, and to them by the lakeside in the early morning a special sight of him was granted. If, as seems probable, in spite of Luke's account, some at least of them did depart for Galilee, and if the early chapters of Acts are in any degree historical, then these disciples must have subsequently gone back to Jerusalem—and this is of great significance. It was their first definite act of renewed faith, the first palpable evidence of restored assurance. Unless they had felt sure that the life-work of their Master was not ended, that he still needed them to bring it to completion, it is difficult to see what could have induced them to face again the conflicts and perils of the capital. Dr. McGiffert says :

That Christianity has had a history is due to the fact that these disciples did not go back disheartened to their old pursuits, and live on as if they had never known him; but that on the contrary, filled with the belief that their Master still lived, and conscious of holding a commission from him, they banded themselves together with the resolve of completing his work and preparing their countrymen for his return. Their resolve, put into execution when they left Galilee and returned to Jerusalem, marks the real starting-point in the history of the Church.²

¹ John xii. 24-26.

² *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, p. 42.

What was it that restored their confidence? Certainly their assurance of the Resurrection; but, as was said above, this was essentially a religious and not a merely intellectual conviction. It was the certainty that their relation to Jesus, and through him to God, which had been rudely broken by his unexpected defeat and death, was now renewed—a relation richer in content and fuller in possibilities than even that which they had known in the days of his flesh. That this is no fancy is shown by the remarkable fact that in all the New Testament there is no word of regret at the severance of the old ties, no sigh

But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

The Jesus whom they had known in all his “grace and truth,” the Master whom they had loved and revered so deeply, the Teacher who had kindled their imaginations by his words of insight and made their hearts glow by his deeds of love, was no fading memory, but present and active as before, though unseen by the outward eye. Far more truly than Julius Cæsar in Shakespeare’s tragedy, Jesus after death is the moving spirit of all the action that follows.

PART II

THE NEW LIFE

SUMMARY

The nature of Christianity is to be inferred, not alone from the life and teaching of Jesus, but from what he made of his first followers. Their experience at Pentecost marks (1) a new release of latent power, moral, intellectual, and even physical ; (2) the consciousness of an inward Guide and Inspirer, adequate to all emergencies ; (3) the sense that this Guide was the living Spirit of their Master ; (4) a new spirit of love, fellowship and corporate unity. This free, prophetic and spiritual religion could not be confined within the narrow walls of the existing Jewish Church. The first step in creating a new organization was the appointment of "the seven." Reception of the Gospel by Samaritans and pagans caused acute difficulties, but these were surmounted through reliance on the guidance of the Spirit. The Church as a whole took a middle course between the free universalism of Paul and the legalistic ideas of the Jerusalem community. The real content of early Christianity was the consciousness of new life with God and new relations to men ; only indirectly was it a matter of intellectual belief or formal organization.

CHAPTER IV

THE APOSTOLIC FELLOWSHIP

WE cannot gain an adequate understanding of the nature of Christianity by the study, however enlightened by historical knowledge, of the Synoptic Gospels alone. These documents are indeed all-important for the foundation they enable us to lay, which is to be sought in the mind and purpose of the Founder himself. But they attempt little more than to give a truthful though fragmentary account of Jesus and of the impression he made on his first disciples. There was much in his mind which he could not convey in the days of his flesh to men who were as yet dull of understanding. If we are to reach a due conception of "Christianity as Life," we must take into account what these followers of Jesus became after he had left them in the body—the enlargement of their vision, the deepening of their insight, the enrichment of their whole personalities by his influence upon them. Christianity is to be judged by what it can make of men. We turn then to a brief study of Christianity in the Apostolic Age, as it is presented in the Acts of the Apostles, in some of the New Testament Epistles, and in the fourth Gospel.¹

We are brought up at once against the much-debated question of the historical character of the Book of Acts. As this vitally affects our view of the Apostolic Fellowship, it must receive attention. Is the book real history, as it professes to be, or is it a late-written romance, intended as an eirenicon between the Judaising and the Gentile-

¹ "Before we can try to 'explain Christianity,' it is well to ask what Christianity actually was in its earliest years." (Foakes-Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. II, p. 4 n.)

favouring parties in the early Church? The basis of the latter view, which has been widely held, especially in Germany, is the difficulty of reconciling the accounts of the relations between Paul and the older Apostles described in Acts xi. and xv. with Paul's own statements, especially in Gal. i. and ii. The latter give us first-hand evidence, and, if the former are not reconcilable with them, it is Acts that must give way. The question is much too large and difficult to be argued here; I can only say that the view to which I am led agrees with that of the majority of British students of the New Testament, and of Harnack, that in spite of some unresolved discrepancies the Book of Acts appears to be in the main historical. Some of the author's statements, especially on matters of which he can scarcely have had personal knowledge, seem to be open to question—particularly the nature, or at any rate the date, of the decision of the Apostles (recorded in Acts xv.) regarding the non-imposition on the Gentile Christians of the whole Mosaic law. Speaking broadly, the author appears to have been a sound and careful historian; and any mistakes he has made would seem to be due to lack of information, and not to deliberate misrepresentation of facts.

As regards the date of the book, while we must allow for the possibility that it was not written till near the close of the first century,¹ an earlier time is strongly suggested by the fact, which is insisted on by radical as well as by conservative critics, that the author makes no use of, and seems to have been unacquainted with, the Epistles of Paul.² We can hardly say more than that the

¹ Even were so late as A.D. 95 accepted, the Lucan authorship might still be entertained. If Luke as a young man accompanied Paul in some of his travels in the fifties, he may have been no more than seventy-five by the end of the century.

² "Acts and Paul are singularly independent of each other" (Foakes-Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. II, p. 198). "Acts is on the whole independent of the Epistles [of Paul], and its narrative is only intelligible if the author did not know them" (chapter by

book probably appeared at some time between A.D. 80 and 100.

Its main purpose would seem to have been to offer not only a manual of instruction for fellow-Christians, but a defence of Christianity before the Roman world as a lawful religion. With this in view the author endeavours to show that the Christian community is the rightful development of that of the Jews, which has been tolerated in the Empire ; and that Christians themselves have generally been well treated by Roman officials. It is probably for this reason that he ends his book with the resounding word ἀκωλύτως, "unprevented," and makes no mention of Paul's trial and condemnation by the Emperor.¹ He makes no attempt to present a complete account of the early years of Christianity, but uses local traditions (some of them probably already written down) of what had happened in a few centres like Jerusalem, Antioch and Ephesus, about which information was available. Other important places like Alexandria, Damascus and Tarsus he barely mentions. He uses a travel diary kept by some companion of Paul, probably himself. Paul's summary of his sufferings, which is given in 2 Cor. xi. 23-27, shows what wide gaps there are in our knowledge of events ; and of other Apostles than Paul, after the very early days, we hear but little.

What, then, is the New Testament picture of the first Christian community ? So far as the scanty records enable us to judge, the disciples of Jesus, after his crucifixion,

Windisch, in the same book, p. 308, opposing the Lucan authorship). The later the date, the more unlikely it seems that the author would or could have ignored Paul's letters to the churches.

¹ The attempt has been made to show that the Book of Acts was designed as a defence of Paul, with his trial in view, and that Luke does not mention the trial because when he wrote it had not taken place. But this requires that the book should have been written by about A.D. 62, which is almost certainly too early. It was preceded by the third Gospel, which in its present form, as was mentioned above, can hardly be put earlier than A.D. 80 (Chapter I, p. 17).

were completely disillusioned and hopeless. His warnings that his work would probably issue in his death had fallen on deaf ears, and unseeing eyes had failed to share his glimpses of victory through defeat. The pathetic remark of the two who were walking to Emmaus on the third day—"we hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21)—shows that they had at one time begun to believe in him as a national deliverer; but such a spark of faith had been, to all appearance, extinguished by his overthrow and death. With their assurance of his resurrection, however, it began to glow again; and the clearest evidence of this, as mentioned in the last chapter, is that those of them who had fled to Galilee returned to Jerusalem.¹ It was, however, still crude and earth-bound: they hoped that even yet, in some unimagined way, he would "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts i. 6). The narrative of the Ascension in the first chapter of Acts is cast in the crude spatial and material terms which alone had meaning for the Jewish thought of the day. The story, as Luke received and records it, is that they seemed to see their Master literally carried up into the clouds, and were addressed by angels who assured them that from the sky he would come again. It is a reflection of the kind of thoughts that at this stage possessed their minds. Some light is thrown on the nature of the "Ascension" by the fourth Evangelist, who after years of experience and reflection had apparently come to think of it as a transition between his bodily presence on earth and his glorified existence in the spiritual sphere. If we may paraphrase and interpret the words attributed to the risen Jesus in John xx. 17, we may perhaps read them thus: "Cling to me no longer; I am not (as I once was) a physical presence; but in days to come you shall know that I am no less real. I am in process of ascending to my spiritual home with God, where I shall be with you

¹ See above, p. 71.

always, and you will not need these outward visions of me to assure you of the fact.”¹ If this is not mere fancy, we may conjecture that the experience called the “Ascension” was needed to enable the Jewish minds of those disciples to cross the bridge between material and spiritual, and to reach an assured conviction of the continued reality and abiding presence of their unseen Lord. They must learn to hold fast to that belief when his resurrection appearances were no longer granted.

The disciples waited at Jerusalem, expecting probably that almost immediately the “promise of the Father” would be fulfilled by the visible return of their Master from heaven, to end the existing world-order and set up his Kingdom. It *was* fulfilled, but not in the way that any of them had anticipated. There came upon them the first of those strange “revivals” that have marked from time to time the history of Christianity. There was a profound disturbance of their whole inner being, which suddenly welled up into consciousness and gave rise to what seemed physical manifestations—the “rushing of a mighty wind, and tongues parting asunder, like as of fire.” On another occasion we read that “when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were gathered together” (Acts iv. 31).² We need not take these expressions quite literally, as though *anyone* present would have perceived these signs; rather they were the outcome of an intense religious experience, which thus took outward form to the eyes and ears of the subjects of it. The only sign that

¹ The thought appears to be nearly the same as in John xiv. 1-3, though here there is no mention of Ascension. Jesus is leaving his disciples in the body to prepare for them a home with God and with himself in the spiritual order. The words have not (as is generally imagined) any special reference to the life after death.

² There are similar expressions in the *Journal* of George Fox, a man of remarkable sanity: as when he says that at Mansfield in 1648 he was moved to pray at a great meeting, “and the Lord’s power was so great that the house seemed to be shaken.”

impressed outsiders seems to have been the "glossolalia" or speaking with tongues—which Paul, our first authority, explains as an ecstatic utterance of prayer or praise intelligible only to the speaker and perhaps to others in close spiritual sympathy with him (1 Cor. xiv.). There can be little doubt that Luke, though faithful to his sources of information, has misrepresented it as the power to speak foreign languages without learning them. He himself bears unintentional witness to the truth of Paul's view of the matter by recording that some of the bystanders imagined the disciples to be drunk, just as Paul states (1 Cor. xiv. 23) that an outsider would suppose anyone "speaking with a tongue" to be insane. And, further, he reports a discourse by Peter in explanation of the phenomenon, in which no allusion whatever is made to speaking in foreign languages.

It was natural and inevitable that the Pentecostal manifestation should be ascribed to the Spirit of God, for this had been for ages the orthodox Jewish explanation of any exceptional access of power in men—especially prophetic power and the inspiration from which it sprang. The evangelists, particularly Luke, speak of the Spirit as inspiring exceptional persons like John the Baptist; and the remarkable experience that came to Jesus himself after his baptism is described as the descent of the Spirit upon him. It is, however, noteworthy that they do not represent Jesus himself as frequently speaking of the Spirit.¹ Was this because he felt the Father always so near to him that he had no need of an impersonal medium to convey the Divine power, and because he could not think of its exercise as in any way occasional or exceptional? Peter in his Pentecostal address is simply following the ordinary Jewish

¹ E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament*, pp. 71-80. "In a real sense the Spirit rested upon Jesus, and for that reason he was unconscious of its presence." Dr. Scott finds in this absence of teaching about the Spirit "a striking proof of the fidelity of our Gospels to genuine tradition." In the fourth Gospel there is, of course, much more of it.

view when he ascribes to the Spirit the sudden outbreak of prophetic fervour ; but it is by a wonderful flash of insight that he discerns in it the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, and infers from this fulfilment that the New Age has already dawned. The Spirit is no longer the prerogative of a few exceptional persons ; it is granted to young and old alike, and even the servants and the handmaidens prophesy. But it would be long years before any followers of Jesus would penetrate deep enough to discover that this gift of the Spirit was itself the fulfilment of " the promise of the Father."

If we try to go behind the outward and sensible signs of the Spirit's presence and activity, that we may discern what really happened at Pentecost, we shall note four main elements. First, there was a wonderful release of latent and unsuspected powers, moral, intellectual, and even physical—so that the disciples felt themselves, and appeared to others, as new men and women. Despair was changed to abounding joy, the sense of desertion to a feeling of companionship, shrinking fear to resolute courage. Wonderful new meanings opened out before them of the tragedy that had been enacted at Jerusalem ; they saw now what their Master had meant by his warnings of coming death : it was the fulfilment of prophecy. His identification of his person and work with that of the suffering Servant now for the first time became intelligible.¹ Of this inward illumination, and the conviction and courage it brought with it, Peter's address to the multitudes in Acts ii. is the outstanding example. That powers of bodily healing also accompanied it, according to the tradition Luke had received, is clear from many passages—such as the third chapter of Acts and the story of Peter's work at Joppa in the ninth.

Secondly, the assurance was brought to them that they

¹ This is suggested by the application of the term " Servant " to Jesus in Acts iii. 13, 26, iv. 27, 30. Compare Philip's exposition of Isa. liii. to the Ethiopian Acts, viii. 32-35.

were not left alone to find as best they might, in thick darkness, the way that God would have them take. The burden of hopeless inability to find the way was lifted, with an immense release from care, when they were assured of an inward Guide that spoke to their souls as with the authority of God Himself. "In all ages the sorest of human problems has been 'the Silence of God.' The hunger of the human soul for a voice from heaven—for some clear knowledge of the hidden mind of God—is seen not alone in the resort, in ancient days, to inspired prophets and priests with their Urim and Thummim, but in Delphic oracle and Roman augury, in magic and divination, in the persistent belief, wide as the human race, that certain persons had dealings with the unseen world."¹ The sense of an inward Guide, available for all, satisfied this hunger. It also released its recipients from the burden of Pharisaic legalism: they needed no longer an elaborate code of rules, and a hedge of tradition for guarding it, for a living Teacher directed their ways. They now began to understand why their Master had so often acted in sovereign independence of their sacred Law, and had sought to awaken them to a similar independent life with God.

Thirdly, the Spirit comes to be thought of, not as *Something*, a vague influence from God, but as a *personal* presence, with a mind and will of its own. The Spirit (doubtless through the mouth of some prophet) calls for the separation of Barnabas and Saul for special service (Acts xiii. 2), and guides their journeyings in Asia Minor (xvi. 6), probably through circumstances over which they had no control. The verse that follows that last quoted reveals the source of this more personal note, which is quite new, and which shows impressively the freshness of the experience that began at Pentecost. "They assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not." It is not that

¹ *Authority and the Light Within*, by the present writer, p. 58.

they have reached any idea of a "third Person of the Trinity." Of such speculation there is no sign, and it would have been quite alien to those Jewish minds. It is that the Spirit is becoming half-consciously identified with the risen and living Christ: it is *his* Spirit that is felt to be at work. I say "half-consciously," because this identification is rarely explicit. What prevented it from taking clear shape in the minds of the disciples was no doubt their belief in Jesus as Messiah, and the fact that the Messiah had never been regarded as an incarnation of the Spirit of God; and also their assurance that he was not on earth but in heaven—which they pictured as a separate region of space—whence they expected him to return. This expectation filled the thoughts of the early Church, but in some of the leaders it gradually subsided, and seems to have been almost entirely transcended by the author of the fourth Gospel.¹ The most inspired minds in the early Church were moving in the direction of identification; the work of the Spirit and that of the living Christ were the same, and could not permanently be held apart in thought. The expressions of Paul on the subject are not always clear or consistent with one another, but in 2 Cor. iii. 17, he says explicitly "The Lord (i.e. Christ) *is* the Spirit": he makes the identification in spite of himself. In the fourth Gospel it is quite clear and conscious: Jesus means the same thing when he says "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter," and when he assures his friends "I will not leave you orphans; I come to you."² In accordance with this the Spirit as "Comforter" is for the first time spoken of not as "it," but as "he" (*ἐκεῖνος*).

Fourthly, the gift of the Spirit issued, in the minds of the disciples, in a new power of love to men, and a most

¹ The only allusion to the expected "coming" of Jesus is in the Appendix, John xxi. 22.

² John xiv. 16, 18; compare xvi. 7, 16.

vivid sense of fellowship with one another. *Koinwnia*, Fellowship, is perhaps the most distinctive watchword of the first Christian community, and the aptest description of what followed Pentecost. This is the truth that underlies the popular notion that Pentecost marked the founding of the Christian Church. The idea is incorrect if by "Church" we mean an organization; for at first the disciples were content with the Jewish organization to which they were accustomed, and had no thought of setting up another. For some time they hardly knew what to call themselves—whether "Believers," "Brethren," or "The Way," all of which seem to have been tried. Luke's difficulty in finding a name is shown in Acts ii. 47, where the oldest manuscripts have "the Lord added *to it* day by day those that were being saved." A previous verse (ii. 42), however, if rightly translated shows that "the Fellowship" expressed what was in his mind: "They were continuing in the Apostles' teaching *and in the Fellowship*, in the breaking of the loaf and in the prayers."¹

Koinwnia implies something possessed in common: what was it? Mainly a common *experience*, which they attributed to the one Spirit that was vivifying them all, and brought with it a deep consciousness of oneness.² They felt like a larger family, but without the exclusiveness that often accompanies family life. Peter's discourses are evidence of

¹ Among the terms used in the early chapters of Acts for the body of believers in Jesus are: "the brethren" (Acts i. 15, xi. 1); "the fellowship" (ii. 42); "it" (ii. 47); "their own company" (iv. 23); "believers," or "they that believed" (iv. 32, v. 14); "the disciples," or "the disciples of the Lord" (vi. 1, 2, 7, ix. 1, 19, 26, xi. 29); "the Way" (ix. 2); "Saints" (ix. 13); "all that call upon [Christ's] name" (ix. 14, 21); "the church" (v. 11, viii. 1, 3, ix. 31, xi. 26). From the twelfth chapter onwards "the church" is usual, but "the Way" appears in xix. 9, 23. In Gal. i. 22 Paul uses the curious expression "the churches of Judea which were in Christ," implying that there were other "churches" (no doubt Jewish synagogues) that were not "in Christ."

² Note especially Acts iv. 32: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul."

their intense desire to bring into the family circle all their fellow-Jews—as yet they had not thought of a wider appeal.¹ The sense of fellowship was fostered by, and found its natural expression in, their constant meetings together, either in the Temple or in private houses (Acts ii. 46); and, in the latter case, in the simple meals which they took together—"the breaking of the loaf." This phrase shows that they regarded the loaf as the chief symbol of their unity;² Eastern minds always attached a deep significance to "table communion," which was believed to establish between those who had eaten together a bond that might not be lightly broken. Probably each meal taken in common began with a solemn breaking of the loaf by the host or head of the group, in the way they remembered their Master doing it. So far it helped to preserve in their minds a fresh memory of him. It should be noted that the emphasis is laid on the *breaking*, and not on the *partaking* of the bread. Earlier than Paul's letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xi. 26) there seems to be no evidence that the breaking of the loaf was intended to commemorate the death of Jesus.³ It is this feeling of corporate unity, together with their expectation of the almost immediate return of their Master, which explains the pooling of their possessions and the distribution of them to those who were in need (Acts iv. 32-35).⁴ It also explains the intensity of

¹ Compare Acts xi. 19.

² Compare 1 Cor. x. 17: "One loaf, one body, are we the many, for we all share of the one loaf."

³ Even in the *Didaché* (a manual of Church instruction for certain churches, dating probably from the end of the first or beginning of the second century) there is no reference to the death of Jesus in the form of words recommended for the "Eucharist" (Thanksgiving) in the case of either the "cup" or "the broken bread."

⁴ It is clear from the example of Barnabas, which follows the above passage, and also from Acts v. 4, that no compulsion whatever was exercised, and that the sharing out did not necessarily extend to the whole of a person's property. It looks as though the extent of the early "communism" at Jerusalem had been exaggerated either by the author of Acts or by the source he followed.

their resentment against the action of Ananias and Sapphira in pretending to have parted with more than they had really given. This was treachery to the Fellowship as well as to the Spirit, and the fate that overtook the guilty pair was regarded as well deserved. Luke, and the source from which he drew the story, evidently looked upon their death as a Divine "judgment" on them for their deception; but it is not easy to reconcile such a view, however persistently it has been held, with the words of Jesus about calamities in Luke xiii. 1-5—words, if we may venture to say so, of deep penetration and supreme sanity.

Such were some of the results of the Pentecostal experience. It meant in reality that *a new type of religion had emerged*—a free and "spiritual" religion, neither ritual nor legalistic, such as the most inspired of the prophets had dimly conceived; and one which was bound to break the fetters of the narrow Jewish faith. But for the present the "Fellowship" was unconscious of its own revolutionary tendencies. The new wine of the Kingdom had to ferment before it burst the old wine-skins. Those who believed that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth were far at first from understanding that this belief, to change the figure, would cut them adrift from their moorings in the landlocked haven of Judaism, and drive them out on the wide ocean of humanity.¹

For the time they were quite content to be devout Jews, diligent in attendance at the Temple worship (Acts iii. 1), distinguished from others of their class only by their acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. Peter, indeed, pleads with the people to repent and be baptized (doubtless into the name of Jesus, as his followers); but there was nothing un-Jewish in either of these demands. He almost goes out

¹ "Christianity, while in form a reformation of Judaism, was in spirit a revolution. It was a return, however, to essential prophetic Hebraism, which it 'fulfilled' in the highest sense and transformed into a spiritual universalism." (Bartlet and Carlyle, *Christianity in History*, p. 36.)

of his way to acquit his people and their rulers of guilty intention in killing "the Prince of Life," saying that it was in ignorance they had acted (Acts iii. 17). The early opposition of the priestly Sadducees, and their attempt to strangle the new faith at its birth, is represented by Luke as due to their fear of the consequences of the spread of belief in resurrection (chapter iv. 1, 2); but more probably they simply feared a disturbance of the public peace.¹ The change in the characters of Peter and the others is shown in the courage with which they stood up to the authorities, assured that it was God who was controlling and directing them (iv. 19, v. 29), and that His orders, not man's, must be obeyed. The advice of Gamaliel seems to have convinced the rulers of the futility of persecution, and for a time the new sect was apparently left alone, to sink or swim as best it might.

The first step in creating a definite organization was taken as the outcome of a practical need. The sharing of possessions began to work unfairly as the number of disciples increased, and many persons joined the "Fellowship" who were personally unknown to the original leaders. The evils of "indiscriminate charity" began to appear; some got more than their share of "the daily ministration," and others less, or nothing at all. The latter were for the most part Greek-speaking Jews from other parts of the Empire, called Hellenists, temporary or permanent residents in Jerusalem, but not well known to the Palestinians. So long as the distribution was in private hands, these were naturally apt to be neglected. Some measure of "charity organization" was therefore urgent, and a demand arose for the appointment of official distributors. It was not reasonable to expect the Twelve to leave their primary work of spreading the message of Jesus "to serve tables"; and so the disciples were called together and asked to nominate

¹ So McGiffert, *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, p. 83.

seven men of sound character and discretion to attend to this business. This was done (by what method of election we are not informed), and the men selected were duly appointed by the Apostles with prayer and the "laying on of hands." All the seven (they are never called "deacons") have Greek names, and it is reasonable to suppose that most of them were Hellenists. Their work seems to have given satisfaction, but further trouble arose from an unexpected quarter.

The Hellenists as a rule were more liberal than the stricter Palestinian Jews, and were often in consequence unpopular; perhaps for this reason some of them desired to win favour by showing special zeal for the Law. Stephen, the leader of the seven, was almost certainly a Hellenist, and a man of rare spiritual power. He was of the liberal type, and seems to have been one of the first Christians to suspect that the Jewish religious system might conceivably be superseded. Whether justly or not, he was accused by Hellenists belonging to certain foreign synagogues at Jerusalem (not, of course, Christian) of speaking against the Temple and the Law of Moses, and was brought to trial before the Sanhedrin. In his defence he enraged the Jews by charging them with always having resisted the Holy Spirit—by persecuting the prophets, and finally slaying the Messiah of whom the prophets had foretold. In a sudden access of fury, and without waiting for the sentence, they hurried him outside the city and stoned him to death. It should be noted that in his long defence there is nothing to show that Stephen "questioned the continued validity of the Jewish Law, or suggested in any way the call of the Gentiles"¹—as Paul, later on, certainly did.

The murder of Stephen was the signal for another outbreak of persecution, far more serious than the last. The Jewish authorities seem now to have been convinced that

¹ McGiffert, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

their whole religious organization was in danger, and to have determined to stamp out the new "heresy" altogether. The disciples, to save their lives, were compelled either to go into hiding or to leave Jerusalem; and we see from Saul's commission to Damascus that even in other cities they were far from safe. The persecution registers another stage in the development of Christianity, and this in two ways: first, it was made clear that the Jewish Church had no room within its fold for the followers of a crucified Messiah; and second, the message of Jesus began to be spread abroad among the Jews who were already present in force in most cities of the Roman world. The persecution does not appear to have lasted long, after its most zealous initiator was himself converted to the new faith; but long enough to allow the seed of Christianity to take root among Jews in many distant places.

The conversion of Saul, and the mission to the Gentiles with which he believed himself to have been entrusted, marks a further stage. In the next chapter we shall be concerned with his peculiar contribution to Christianity; meanwhile we note that the problem of the accession of Gentiles to the Fellowship was raised even before he began his missionary activity. It is clear that the mind of Peter (and probably the minds of other Jerusalem leaders) had already been exercised with the question what they ought to do if Gentiles came asking to hear the message. The willingness of hated Samaritans to receive it, as recorded in Acts viii., would suggest that it could not be confined to orthodox Jews alone. Peter's vision on the house-top at Joppa probably reflects these questionings; and when the request for his help came from the Roman centurion Cornelius (who was, of course, an uncircumcized man with whom no strict Jew could without ceremonial defilement, and therefore "sin," have close and familiar intercourse),¹

¹ Acts x. 28; compare John xviii. 28: the Jews could not enter a pagan building without becoming ceremonially "unclean."

he went in obedience to what seemed the Spirit's clear direction. While he was giving the message of Christ to Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts x. 44)—the evidence of this being, as before, that they "spoke with tongues." Amaze-ment seized the Jewish Christians who had come with Peter—for the witness of their own senses compelled them to recognize that uncircumcized persons could be fellow-disciples of Jesus and full participants in the blessings of the New Age; and that these were therefore fit to be baptized.¹ When Peter returned to Jerusalem his action at Cæsarea raised a storm in the Fellowship. The stricter Jewish brethren "contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcized and didst eat with them." We are not told that Peter had actually accepted the hospitality of Cornelius, but he does not defend himself against the charge. He contents himself with declaring what had happened, and with the plea that he could not have resisted a clear manifestation of the mind of God (Acts xi. 1-18). The Jewish Christians are represented by Luke as satisfied with this defence, but the questions of the relation of Gentile believers to the Mosaic Law, and of Gentile and Jewish Christians to one another, remained to be settled.

These problems first became acute at the great city of Antioch. Luke tells us (Acts xi. 19-26) that some brethren driven from Jerusalem by persecution preached there to Jews only; and that Hellenist believers from Cyprus, and from Cyrene in Africa, spoke to Gentiles also, and that many of these accepted the message. The Jerusalem Church (he says nothing about the Apostles), hearing of this, sent

¹ We note that no comment is made on the fact that Cornelius and the others became Christians *before baptism*. The new and astonishing fact was that they had become Christians without undergoing circumcision. The story, clearly, was told by Luke at length as the first case of the kind; there is nothing to show that the Ethiopian of chapter viii was not a Jewish proselyte.

down Barnabas, who brought Saul (Paul) from Tarsus to help him, and for a whole year they dealt with the situation that had arisen. Barnabas, it is clear, was in full sympathy with the Gentile Christians, and evidently a large community of these was gathered. No attempt seems to have been made to impose on them circumcision or detailed observance of the Jewish Law, and apparently the two sections of the Fellowship at Antioch were on familiar and brotherly terms with one another. Then some unauthorized members of the Jerusalem Church came down and tried to persuade the Gentile converts that only the circumcized could be "saved." The result was confusion, and Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to consult with "the Apostles and elders about this question." The result of the Council was, broadly, an agreement that the Jewish Law should not be imposed on the Gentiles.¹

But this did not mean that Jewish Christians were to be free to disregard it. Paul writes to the Galatians about an arrangement privately made with the Jerusalem leaders that he and Barnabas should preach to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision—which means, possibly, an agreement that Paul should not try to set Jewish believers free from the Law, while Peter and James would refrain from imposing it on Gentiles. If this was the nature of the agreement, it seems to have been loyally observed. But it did not settle the extremely important question of the relation of the two

¹ The real nature of the "decree," and whether it was issued at all at this time, is one of the unsolved problems of New Testament study. Paul does not mention it in his letter to the Galatians, as he must surely have done if it had been issued before he wrote. In Acts xxi. 25 James tells Paul about it as if it were something new to the latter. The decree itself is strange, since it puts avoidance of "fornication" in the midst of prohibitions about food. The "Western" text of Acts omits "things strangled," and adds the Golden Rule—making the decree refer to idolatry, murder, fornication and selfishness: i.e. moral, not ritual, offences. This looks like an attempt to get over its difficulties; it makes the decree more edifying, no doubt, but quite irrelevant to the question the Council had been called to decide.

sections to one another. Was there to be full "table communion" between the two? Were they to sit down together, or separately, for "the breaking of the loaf"? Or were there to be two distinct Fellowships, one of which considered itself on a higher spiritual plane than the other? This question to Paul seemed all-important; the future of Christianity, he thought, depended on its being settled in the right way. This explains his intense indignation with Peter and Barnabas at Antioch (an episode not mentioned by Luke), when after eating freely with the Gentile believers they withdrew, through fear of certain stricter Jews who came down from James at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 11-14). His public rebuke of Peter for not showing the courage of his convictions must have seriously strained the relations between the parties, and perhaps had something to do with his subsequent separation from Barnabas (Acts xv. 39). The strain was afterwards increased by the action of some of the more fanatical Jews in trying to persuade Paul's converts in "Galatia" (probably those at Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) that to reach the highest level of Christian life they must undergo circumcision, and observe the Mosaic ordinances generally. The Epistle to the Galatians is a fiery indictment of this position, and a noble plea for a spiritual as opposed to a legalistic religion.

In the end Paul's universal spirit won the day, and the

¹ We can understand the situation to some extent by thinking of "caste" in India, or the relations of well-meaning people of different colour to one another where race feeling runs strong, as in the southern States of America and parts of South Africa. It was, however, not only that a Jew who ate with an uncircumcized man would "lose caste" among his own people; he had been so trained that he had come to regard unnecessary contact with Gentiles as involving defilement, in fact as a kind of sin. The teaching of the prophets had been partly forgotten, and the ritual and moral requirements of the Law had been mixed up. It is strange that a modern liberal Jew, so enlightened as Mr. Claude Montefiore, seems to be insensible of this. (See his chapter on "The Spirit of Judaism" in *Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 60.)

Christian Church was saved. Had the Judaisers' view prevailed, it would have remained essentially a Jewish sect, and could never have gained an independent footing or become a universal religion.¹ We owe more than we can say to Paul's deep insight into the nature of Christianity; though unacquainted with his Master in the flesh, he had come to understand his principles better than the earlier disciples. But we can well understand their natural chagrin at being shown the way by one whom they would be inclined to regard as an upstart and an interloper. Happily it seems that Peter was sufficiently imbued with the spirit of his Master to forgive Paul's arraignment or impeachment at Antioch; in 1 Corinthians he is mentioned with affection, and there is no sign that the estrangement lasted long.

I have treated this subject of the relations between Jew and Gentile in the early Church with some fullness, because it shows better than anything else the spirit that underlay the Fellowship. There was acute divergence between some of the leaders as to the path they ought to take; but they submitted to be led by the Spirit, and they were led aright. They were faced with wholly new and unexpected facts—the entry of uncircumcized Gentiles into the same spiritual experiences that they themselves enjoyed. Whatever misgivings and hesitations some of them must have felt—whatever fears that if liberty were granted it would degenerate into licence and pagan immorality—in the end they opened their minds to the facts, and had the courage to choose the dangerous path of freedom and reliance on the inward

¹ Harnack points out that the Jewish Christians were much divided among themselves, some holding more to Judaism and some to Christianity. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 this division was intensified, for the Christian view was that this calamity was a just punishment of the Jewish nation for having crucified their Messiah. The party gradually died out. By A.D. 180 they were placed by the Catholic Church on the roll of "heretics." (*Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, pp. 68-74.)

Guide. They abandoned the attempt to safeguard truth and right living by a code of prohibitions that Jesus had rendered needless.

Before concluding this chapter it will be well to try to get a broad view of the general Christianity of the first century. There was much in Paul's teaching, especially in regard to the freedom of the Christian from law, which most of his fellow-believers failed to understand ; as indeed they failed in measure to understand Jesus himself. At the opposite pole to Paul were the more extreme and fanatical Jews of Palestine, whose Christian followers were later known as Nazarenes or Ebionites. These Christian Jews were content with the recognition of Jesus as Messiah and as Lawgiver ; for Paul and his ideas they had no use. For them Christianity was law, and salvation was to be sought by keeping the commandments of Jesus, who in their view had not abrogated the Law of Moses. Between these two extremes was the great body of believers, both Jewish and Gentile ; and their thoughts, or those of some of their leaders, may be found in such writings as the Epistles of James and 1 Peter, and in that to the Hebrews. The writers of the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts may be classed with them—" Matthew " tending somewhat to the Ebionite and Luke to the Pauline side.¹ The same essential views are found in the sub-apostolic writings of the first and early second centuries, like Barnabas and Clement of Rome and the *Didaché*. They were all agreed that the ceremonial law was not binding on Gentile Christians, and most of them, outside Palestine at least, soon concluded that Jewish Christians also were set free from it. The controversy on this subject soon passed away. But they still thought of the Christian life as strict observance of the revealed law

¹ Note the words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 17-19) as reported by Matthew but not by Luke : " Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets," etc.

of God—not, as in the Pauline mysticism, as an inner union with Christ whereby his life became theirs. As Paul also was at pains to insist that the ethical standard set by Jesus must be maintained, most of them seem to have been unconscious of any disagreement with him, and Paul himself gladly recognized them as fellow-disciples, and rejoiced in their evangelizing work.¹ This conception of Christianity as Law met the needs of many of the best pagans in that age, who, shocked with the prevailing looseness of morals, were seeking for a secure ethical basis.

But Christianity, to the rank and file of believers, was more than a law, it was *salvation*. This was at first thought of mainly in eschatological terms, as deliverance from the destruction that would come on the unbelieving world when the Messiah reappeared in glory, and as the right to share in the bliss of his people in the New Age that was shortly to appear. It carried with it, of course, the hope of immortality for the “saved”: Christ had “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Tim. i. 10).² But this eternal life was not regarded in Pharisaic and Ebionite fashion as *earned* by due observance of God’s law; rather, with Jesus himself, the main body of his followers thought of it as the free gift of God, a blessing prepared and promised for his faithful people. It was to be secured by repentance, and by faith in the fulfilment of God’s promises; it was not a debt that could be claimed. Sal-

¹ “It is only as we recognize this oneness of purpose which actuated Paul and the many other missionaries of the day, and their consciousness of being engaged in the promotion of a common cause which bound them all together, that we can understand the subsequent development, in which the peculiar views of Paul were so largely crowded out, while his name continued to be held in the highest honour, and all believed themselves true to his memory.” (McGiffert, *op. cit.*, p. 446.) I am largely indebted to this book for the brief sketch of the common Christianity of the early days here given.

² The resurrection of the wicked for future punishment does not seem to have been generally held till later. It is not certainly taught in the writings of Paul.

vation came more and more—largely, it would seem, through the teaching of Paul, who in this respect as in some others understood better than most the spirit of his Master—to be thought of as deliverance from *sin*, and the entry into a new experience of sonship with God ; and therefore to be connected with the present life.

Early Christianity was, then, essentially an experience, individual and collective, of new life with God and new relations to men—relations based on “ the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us ” (Rom. v. 5). Its real content was this experience of the Spirit, bringing with it a glorious release from the old world-order of self-preservation, a new power of self-abandoning love and self-forgetful service. The Christian Fellowship was a community of inspired people, who trusted the Spirit of Christ to lead them both in their personal concerns and in their collective life, and who felt that God was ever calling and enabling them to bring others into the fellowship of love. It was only indirectly a matter of intellectual beliefs or of outward organization. Embedded in it was, of course, belief in the one God, “ the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” in Christ as Messiah, in his resurrection and continued activity ; but beliefs were rather the backbone of the organism than the organism itself. The new life, like all life, had to build for itself an organization ; but, as long as the Spirit was a felt reality, the simplest organization sufficed.

SUMMARY

Paul's presentation of Christianity was highly respected in the Church, but not well understood. His thoughts were based on his own experience, as a Pharisee converted by what he believed to be an interposition of the living Christ. His mysticism is fundamental, and it modified his early eschatological outlook. Christ, living in believers, renders obsolete the attempt to win God's favour by devotion to "law." This is Paul's original contribution to Christianity, but there are hints of it in the Synoptic accounts of the teaching of Jesus. "Justification by Faith" did not mean for Paul a fictitious righteousness, nor did it lower the standard of Christian living. The ethic of the New Age is based on "faith working (in men) through love." Paul's ethical ideal is identical with that of Jesus ; but he develops the thought of the inward moral dynamic by which it can be attained. The Christian community is for him the organ by which all men are to be drawn to share the life of Christ ; and its victory is to be won by the methods that Jesus used.

CHAPTER V

THE PAULINE INTERPRETATION OF CHRISTIANITY

IT has been said that the real Founder of Christianity was not Jesus of Nazareth, but Paul of Tarsus. If by "Christianity" is meant the historic institution called the Christian Church, the statement may, perhaps, be defended. Of the Church as a closely-knit organization, bound together by rigid creeds and sacraments and by the authority of a hierarchical priesthood, we may search in vain the Gospel story of Jesus to find even the germ. It is Paul who is made responsible for first presenting Christianity in ecclesiastical terms. Such a view finds acceptance in many quarters. There are, it must be recognized, not a few sincere Christians whose hearts respond to the beauty and power of the life and teaching of Jesus, who yet, when they turn from the Gospels to the Epistles, are hopelessly repelled by the laboured arguments of the early chapters of Romans. By these they judge of Paul, and for a leader of this type they "have no use." It is in such circles especially that the cry "Back to Jesus" finds favour. Did Paul start the Christian community on a false track, and must we discard him in order to get clear insight into the true nature of our religion? I venture to think not.

There is no doubt that from the first he was misunderstood. That his presentation of Christianity was recognized as having extraordinary vigour and impressiveness is proved by the preservation of his writings, and by their early use for edification in gatherings for Christian worship. But even in the second century the author of 2 Peter found

in them "some things hard to be understood" (2 Peter iii. 15 f.), and this want of understanding was general in the Church. Paul was "over the heads" of most of his fellow-Christians. Moreover, like some other great leaders of religious movements, such as Augustine and Luther, his power of insight was more developed than his power of logical and consistent thought. Men of religious genius and volcanic force of character sometimes see things with extraordinary clearness, without seeing them whole. That which they have thus perceived of truth they can often clothe in words that do not die—especially if by their lives they bear witness to it. But their flashes of insight are not always brought together or harmonized into a consistent whole. Consequently, in trying to interpret the thoughts they have left us, we may easily go wrong if we assume that they can never contradict themselves. We must use freely our critical powers if we are to discover their real meaning; their statements must be studied not in isolation but in relation to one another.

Thanks to the preservation of his self-revealing letters, and to the Book of Acts, there are few characters in ancient history whom we know better than we know Paul. His thoughts were cast in a wider mould than those of the Palestinian leaders, because of his early environment. Born and educated at Tarsus, in Cilicia, a city which though very largely oriental was a centre of Greek learning, he had some acquaintance, perhaps only superficial, with pagan culture. He must have listened to Stoic lecturers, and compared their teachings with those of his Jewish instructors. Though a Hellenist, he was brought up in the strictest Pharisaic tradition, and was in his young manhood sent to Jerusalem to study the Law under Gamaliel. There he very soon became acquainted with the new "heresy" that was being proclaimed by the followers of the crucified Nazarene. Jesus he does not seem to have met with in

the flesh ; his words " have I not seen Jesus our Lord ? " (1 Cor. ix. 1) doubtless refer to his experience on the Damascus road. He was probably a leader in the attack on Stephen (Acts vii. 58) ; and the martyrdom seems to have made on him an ineffaceable impression (Acts xxii. 20). The expression in the story of his conversion attributed to him in Acts xxvi. 12-18, " It is hard for thee to kick against the goad," indicates that the great change was not a mere " bolt from the blue," but had been preceded by a deep inward conflict. These martyrs, who went off smiling to imprisonment or death—the love they showed to one another, and even to their persecutors—was there not something here that he had striven for in vain ? His failure to win the righteousness he was seeking by Pharisaic devotion to the law is poignantly described by himself in Rom. vii. And what if, after all, Stephen were really a prophet, and his words about seeing " the Son of man standing at the right hand of God " were not blasphemy, but truth ? Thoughts like these may have driven him to greater intensity of effort to stamp out such pestilent ideas ; until at last the " repressed complex " burst up into his conscious life, and in a moment he was struck down, blinded with dazzling light.

From that moment Paul was a different being. He was convinced that the Man whose followers he was striving to destroy had appeared and spoken to him—that Jesus though crucified was not dead but living, and that therefore the Nazarenes were right in accepting him as the Messiah. He was led into Damascus a stricken, blinded man ; and there, having recovered his sight, he began as a believer to proclaim the faith he had been trying to stamp out. But his experience went much deeper than the conviction of his reason. His was one of those intense natures in which, when new light comes, the whole man responds and acts. The revelation had searched him to the depths

of his soul. He writes to the Galatians (i. 15, 16) of this crucial experience, that "it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me"—not "*to me*," but "*in me*." The life of Jesus was not an ideal, outside himself, to which he must strive to attain as he had striven to keep the law; it was to take possession of him, and become his own true life. From the date of his conversion we may trace the germ of the "mysticism" that marks his presentation of Christianity.

Even in the ten years or so which are covered by his extant letters (say A.D. 52 to 62) we can discern some development in his thoughts concerning Christ and the Gospel; and there must have been more in the twenty years that preceded these. He started, doubtless, with the Apocalyptic ideas then current in Pharisaic circles—with the expectation of the New Age that was about to dawn at the coming of the Lord's Anointed, who should intervene to overthrow the oppressors, destroy the wicked with fire from heaven, and exalt his people to the place destined for them in the promises of God. Into this framework of Jewish Messianism, which dominated the thoughts of the first followers of Jesus, along with their Pharisaic persecutors, he must somehow fit the new ideas that had come to him with the shattering yet vivifying experience near Damascus; and it may have been for solitude and opportunity for meditation that, as he tells the Galatians, he "went away into Arabia." The Apocalyptic conception remained with him through life as a background of thought, but, as we shall see, it receded further and further from the centre of his consciousness.¹ The Epistle to the Romans makes it fairly clear that even before his conversion Paul's thoughts of the New Age were deeper, more ethical and

¹ Albert Schweitzer, in *Paul and his Interpreters* (1912), suggests that the system of Paul's thought "developed wholly and solely out of that (the Apocalyptic) conception." But this is a thesis not easy to maintain.

spiritual, than those of most of his fellow-Jews. He had realized that for himself, and therefore for others, the supreme need was no mere outward miracle, but deliverance from "the flesh," from inward corrupt tendencies—a deliverance which no devotion to the Law was able to effect. Even the Law, he could see, demanded holiness in the inward man; and he felt that, strive as he would to keep it, he was under condemnation. The highest aspect of the Messianic Age for him was that it would mean deliverance from "the bondage of corruption," and from the death that necessarily accompanied it.¹ His experience on the Damascus road convinced him that Jesus was the Messiah not only in the outward, but in this deeper spiritual sense: that Jesus had conquered death, and was living the life of a glorified spirit:² that he had come in order to share his life with other men, to set them free from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 1-4).

The Resurrection of Jesus was, it seems, to Paul's mind the proof that the New Age had begun; and this meant that the new manifestation of God had rendered obsolete the ancient manifestation in the Law. A fresh order of existence had been ushered in: one in which the righteousness and holiness of God was no longer to be vainly striven after but *received*—received with adoring gratitude by all who would share the risen life of Christ. The felt activity of his living presence—"Christ in you, the hope of glory"—had for ever transcended, and done away with, the old method of trying to win God's favour by keeping perfectly a string of rules. Christ, by offering himself to men, had

¹ Rom. vii. 24, viii. 21; cf. Phil. iii. 21, "fashion anew the body of our humiliation."

² McGiffert, *Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, pp. 127-129. The difficult expression in 2 Cor. v. 16, "even though we have known [a] Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more," probably refers to this deepening of his conception of the work of the true Messiah.

opened a way by which "the mind of the Spirit" could replace "the mind of the flesh," so that the righteousness of the law could be fulfilled in freedom, not in bondage. This happy experience of life "in Christ" became for Paul the dominant feature of the New Age, and threw into the background, more and more as his life went on, the old spectacular ideas of outward Messianic glory. "The Kingdom of God," he came to see more and more clearly, "is not eating and drinking (in an age of ease and plenty), but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. xiv. 17).¹

Here is Paul's unique and original contribution to Christianity—the significance of which is apt to be obscured to us by our very familiarity with Pauline phraseology. Jesus Christ was for him no mere teacher or lawgiver—no mere example of the perfect life—not merely even a manifestation of the nature and character of God. His saving work for men, though Paul uses at times sacrificial language to describe it, was not that of *another* person who comes between man and God, and takes on himself the penalty due to human sin. Its essential nature was that Christ became *one* with men in their sinfulness, and so raised them up to his own level of holiness—if only they would have it so.² Christ's experience of death and resurrection was not a mere event in history; it was to be repeated in the experience of every believer in him. "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). This is in one of his earliest

¹ That Paul should so far have transcended the popular Jewish conception of the Messianic Age is a strong confirmation of our belief that the thoughts of his Master before him cannot have been limited by it.

² 2 Cor. v. 21, which may perhaps be rightly paraphrased thus: "Christ, though sinless, was made one with us in our sinfulness, that we, though sinful, might be made one with him in his righteousness."

letters, and it remained the centre of his thought.¹ In the words of Dr. McGiffert :

It was [here] that Paul departed most widely from the thought of all his predecessors and contemporaries ; that he showed himself most independent of outside influence, and revealed most clearly his religious individuality and originality. Christ saves a man, he says, by entering and taking up his abode within him, by binding him indissolubly to himself, so that it is no longer he that lives but Christ that lives in him. . . . [The boldness of this assertion] is startling. It is not in any sense a scholastic answer, nor an inference from observed facts, nor a logical deduction from premises supplied by Scripture or tradition ; it is an answer based upon direct personal knowledge, upon immediate consciousness. Paul would never have dared to give it, nor could he ever have discovered it, except under the influence and upon the basis of a profound and vivid Christian experience, which was the most real thing in all his life to him. We can understand neither Paul the Christian nor Paul the theologian unless we appreciate that experience and give it its full value. It marks him as one of the great religious geniuses of history, and it has done more than all else to make his name immortal and his influence world-wide ; and that, too, in spite of the fact that he has been all too commonly misinterpreted, and degraded into a mere rabbinic legalist or scholastic dialectician.²

Was Paul really the first to strike upon this thought of identification with Christ, or was any hint of it present in the teaching of his Master ? We may at least recall the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt. xxv, with its words, " inasmuch as ye did it to one of these my brethren,

¹ This conception of identification with Christ is absent in most of the primitive Christian writings outside the letters of Paul—as in Acts, Hebrews, and James. In 1 Peter, which has some Pauline features, the phrase " in Christ " occurs three times, and believers are said to be " partakers of Christ's sufferings " (iv. 13). The expression " that we, having died to sins, might live unto righteousness " (ii. 24) is not quite as Pauline as it looks, for the Greek word for " having died " is more literally " having passed away from." In the Johannine writings, apart from the Apocalypse, the Pauline mysticism is of course abundantly present.

² McGiffert, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 130.

even these least, ye did it unto me"; and the pregnant saying in Mark ix. 37, "Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me." Whether Paul knew of such sayings may well be doubted, but his central conception is none the less an expansion of thoughts suggested by Jesus himself.

And this is true also when we examine in more detail his conception of Salvation. In his earliest letters, to the Thessalonians (the second is less certainly authentic than the first), Salvation is presented mainly in eschatological setting, as escape from the "wrath" or vengeance which the New Age will bring "to them that know not God." But more and more his thoughts turn from "salvation *from*" to "salvation *to*." The real fulfilment of the longing for salvation is to be found in the life of the New Age, which is no other than the life of the risen Christ himself—who is thought of by Paul as the "second Adam," the racial head of the "spiritual man," as Adam was supposed to be of the "natural man" (1 Cor. xv. 22, 45-49). "Christ in you" is the "hope of glory," the "mystery" of the New Age, long hidden but now revealed (Col. i. 26, 27). His life is to be lived on in all who will unite themselves to him by *faith*. This word acquires for Paul a new and specialized meaning—he uses it for the act by which a man forgets himself and his own vain efforts after righteousness, and receives into his soul the Spirit, the life, of Christ. It is no mere intellectual belief, but a responsive act of the whole man, whereby Christ's standing with God becomes his also.

Paul calls this right standing with God "justification." If we remember that the root of the Greek word for "justify" is the same as that of the word for "righteous," we shall see that Paul cannot possibly have meant that faith was a *substitute* for righteousness, as has often been wrongly assumed. Faith, with him, is a substitute not for righteous-

ness, but for "works." He found in faith a way by which real righteousness in the sight of God could be obtained as it never could by "works"—that is, by the legal methods of his former Pharisaic religion. Whatever he says about "imputed righteousness," his actual thought has no place for any righteousness that is not also *imparted*, and therefore real. What the believer does by faith is to appropriate the righteousness of Christ, which is certainly not fictitious—and so to acquire the standing before God which Christ himself enjoys. This escape from sin and its condemnation is, however, only the negative side of salvation; much more important for Paul is the positive side, which is sharing in the resurrection life of Christ. "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. v. 10). We cannot rightly understand the "evangelicalism" of the first five chapters of Romans unless we read them in the light of the "mysticism" of the sixth.

But what connection has this "justification by faith" with the apparently simpler teaching of the Synoptic Gospels? Is it not, after all, a development of the teaching found in the Sermon on the Mount, that "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven"? Jesus had called for a new heart, a renewed will, and not for adherence to a code of rules. While he was with his disciples in the flesh, he could only offer them the vaguest hints as to how such a change in man could be brought about. Paul tries to answer some of the questions that Jesus necessarily left unanswered. The Cross and the Resurrection are new facts, which for him throw a flood of light on the difficult problem. Jesus, as we have seen, was (and knew that he was) much more than the teacher of a higher morality. But so long as he was in the body, separated from his disciples by the fleshly barrier, he could

not explain to them his highest work as the inward Saviour and Healer. This he had to leave to be taught by his living Spirit to such receptive minds as that of Paul. It was Paul who, first of his followers, saw that the spiritual life and character of Jesus himself was to become that of his disciples—that he was to share with them his own sonship with God, his own purity and dedication, his own inner communion with the Father. The starting-point of the real Christian life, Paul saw, was the reception by faith of the actual experience of Jesus himself.

This, it is certain, is the inner meaning of that “fantastic theology” which, says Mr. Bernard Shaw, “owes its enormous vogue to being a premium on sin.”¹ Paul himself seems to have foreseen that his revolt against “law” might be so misunderstood, and he fought against the false inference with all his might.² The life in union with Christ is the sort of life which Jesus himself lived, the life animated by a love that has forgotten self; and from this standard Paul never swerves. If he is to be called “antinomian,” it is only in the sense that his ethical standard was so high that it could not be attained by devotion to any law. In Christ he had found a means by which it could be attained; he was freed at once from the despair of those who, like himself, find that they cannot keep the law, and from the complacency of those who, with a less exacting standard, imagine that they can.

The ethic of the New Age is based, not on outward rules like circumcision, but on “faith working in (men) through love” (Gal. v. 6).³ Apart from its manifestation in the

¹ Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, pp. lxxxvii–xci.

² Rom. iii. 8, vi. 1, 2, 15; Gal. v. 13–26, etc.

³ There is some doubt as to the right translation of the Greek word for “working in” (*ἐνεργουμένη*). It may be a passive, “energized in,” which would make love the *source* of faith and not merely its expression—a pregnant thought. In the following paragraphs I have drawn upon the last of a series of articles entitled “Paul and his Master” which I contributed to *The Friend* in 1922.

life of love to God and man, faith for Paul is nothing. He follows precisely the teaching of his Master when he says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."¹ Anyone who has yielded himself to Christ, in love, and whose inner being is transformed by Christ's indwelling life, will fulfil the precepts of the law without thinking of them in detail, and without thinking of himself. The glorious hymn concerning love in 1 Cor. xiii. sets forth in deathless language the kind of life which love inspires in the true Christian; and its features must have been drawn from the life of Jesus, of which Paul had heard, and which he experienced in himself. This is the life of the New Age into which Paul and his fellow-believers had been lifted. It had been lived once, perfectly for all time, in the person and character of the Master whom they followed. Little as Paul has to say about the earthly life of Jesus, it is his Lord's spirit that breathes in all his words.

In spite of his occasional Rabbinic dialectic and the strange arguments by which he supports his belief in Christ, Paul's conception of Christianity is in essence perfectly simple. It means, for him, the continuation of the life of Jesus, not only in the soul of the individual believer, but in the community or "fellowship" of those who share it. Intellectual belief in Christ as Messiah, Son of God, "image of God," "power" and "wisdom" of God, is not unimportant, but is simply a means to an end—the end being that Christ should repeat his own life in the personal lives of his believing followers. Here is not only a definite moral standard, higher and more exacting even than that of the law in Paul's pre-Christian days, but also a motive and an inspiration to follow and attain it. It is to this indwelling life of the Master that he appeals when he wishes to press

¹ Rom. xiii. 10. In parts of this and the preceding chapter Paul follows almost literally the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount.

home the ethical requirements of Christian living. He draws upon the "meekness and gentleness (or sweet reasonableness)" of Christ when he desires his Corinthian friends to allow him to treat them gently (2 Cor. x. 1 f.). If he gives advice, even of the most elementary kind, he clinches it by appealing to the spirit which Jesus showed, for he knows that a moral dynamic is needed as well as a knowledge of what is right. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. v. 25). "Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died" (Rom. xiv. 15). The Philippians are to preserve harmony with one another, in lowliness of mind, having in themselves the spirit that Jesus showed when he refused equality with God and "emptied himself" for others (Phil. ii. 1-8).

The New Age is the age of the Spirit—and the Spirit means for Paul (though for reasons already given¹ he rarely says so explicitly) the living personality of Jesus, carrying on in his followers the same life he had lived in the body. Those who walk in the Spirit, though free from the leash of a code of rules, will not go *all* ways; they will go the way that Jesus went. "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk [like a line of soldiers on the march]."² "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. v. 22)—an admirable summary of the standard of right living set by Jesus himself. There is here a wonderful development in the conception of "the Spirit." No longer is it thought of as an altogether abnormal and unaccountable working of God in men—the source of powers that appear superhuman, of prophetic frenzy and the like; it is the inspiration of the whole of man's life as a moral being, a power that brings his entire personality into accord with the mind of God. And Paul was not afraid to call his

¹ Chapter IV, p. 83.

² Gal. v. 25. Greek *στοιχῶμεν*, not the usual word for "to walk."

friends to follow him as an example, knowing that it was Christ who was moulding him after his own image. "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). In this there was no self-glorification. Paul undoubtedly had a fiery temper, but it had been brought under control by Christ. The spirit of great-hearted love breathes through his words, even in the angry letter to the Galatians (Gal. iv. 12-20). The mind of a Christian gentleman has hardly ever been more finely shown, and that without a trace of affectation or sense of superiority, than in the little letter to Philemon about his runaway slave. In Paul's thought the Spirit directs and prompts the Christian believer, not only in exceptional moments of inspired enthusiasm, but throughout the whole range of his life and activity.

Yet we cannot do justice to Paul's ethical Christianity if we think of it as confined to the direction and inspiration of the individual Christian life. He uses freely the word *κοινωνία*, "fellowship," which (as we have seen) most accurately expresses what the early Christian community felt itself to be. That community was a fellowship, based on a common possession of the life of the New Age—the Spirit of the living Christ. The Christian Commonwealth is that which God has set up to express this life. It is the "body," of which Christ is the indwelling "Spirit"; and it is to maintain its life, like any other organism, by the harmonious co-operation of the individual organs or "members." This thought is dwelt on in two of Paul's letters,¹ and it is one of his most fruitful contributions to Christian ethics. His greatness of mind is conspicuous in the way he meets and overcomes the most formidable obstacle that then stood in the way of the establishment of such a Commonwealth—the division of the Christian converts into Jews and Gentiles. This was dealt with in

¹ Rom. xii., 1 Cor. xii.

the last chapter, and it is needless to go over the ground again. Had Paul's universal spirit not prevailed, there would have been two Christian Churches instead of one, and it is doubtful whether Christianity could ever have become a world religion. His central principle is eloquently set forth, by himself or some closely kindred spirit, in the letter to some Asiatic churches which we know as "Ephesians." Christ by his death has broken down all barriers, slain all enmities, and created the Church as one body in the one Spirit.

Whether Paul ever raised in his own mind the larger question of the oneness of all humanity, which was being suggested by some of the Stoics of his day, we cannot say with certainty, for his expressions are concerned with the oneness of the "household of faith." But he assuredly sees all mankind, "Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman," as at least *potentially* sharers in the one Life;¹ and it is not an illegitimate extension of his root principles to find in them the power which alone can create a harmony out of the discords of our present world-order, social, racial and international. Until all barriers are broken down, all causes of mutual hate transcended, between nations, races, classes, and religions; until men are willing to live as one family under the Fatherhood of God, bringing their several gifts for the service of the whole body; the New Age in its fullness will not have come.

The upshot, then, of this brief study of Pauline Christianity is that Paul was the first of the followers of Jesus to discover the deepest and most vital element in the Christian life—that it is nothing else than the life of Jesus himself continued in the experience of his disciples,

¹ Col. iii. 11. In an inspired moment he added, in writing to the Galatians (iii. 28) "there can be no male and female"; but he does not seem always to have retained this intuition (1 Cor. xi. 3, Eph. v. 22-24, etc.)

individually and collectively. The source of their Christian activity is to be "the adoption," by which they share the sonship with God that Jesus himself enjoyed;¹ the principles on which they act are to be his principles; the weapons they use in the warfare with evil are to be his weapons. As he conquered, not by force, but by the self-surrender of the Cross, so must they. As his efforts were directed not to the destruction of his enemies, but to winning them by perfect love, so must his followers go forth to win the world for him by the same methods that he used. That the way of love and self-sacrifice is not impotent and futile, Paul himself is the most conspicuous proof. Christ conquered the ablest, most zealous, most devoted and formidable of his opponents by changing him into his chief Apostle. In the words of a recent writer:

Was ever revenge more complete? Imagine this man among those fanatical Jews who would not enter Pilate's hall "lest they should be defiled," yet stood without clamouring for the death of the Carpenter-Prophet who had dared to affront the majesty of their hoary Law. And then see him yielding utterly to the spell of the Cross upon which he or his like had fastened the Rejected. That is real conquest. It is the method of the Christian Revolution.

Here we get the clue to the unity of the New Testament. The Epistles are often opposed to the Gospels as though they contained "rival philosophies." If in the story of the Prodigal Son we have the heart of Christ's message, where, it is asked, is this message to be found amid the maze of speculation about Law, Sin and Sacrifice, which fills the pages of the Epistles? Those who ask that question have failed to notice that the real problem of that immortal tale is the churlish elder brother. "He was angry and would not go in"; and in spite of the father's pleadings there he is left when the tale ends. Good reason for this: when Jesus told the tale the elder brothers were fiercely refusing his invitations to renew fellowship with those despised prodigals whom Jesus "came to seek and to save." The Epistles of Paul show us the elder brother broken down by the Father's love, and leaving

¹ Rom. viii. 15, Gal. iv. 5, Eph. i. 5.

home and its secure delights to go into far countries and seek out those brothers who still lingered among the swine and the husks. If the language in which he tells us how it came about is tortuous and difficult, we may find in it a sign of the contortions of the spirit which had to be straightened out before the elder brother could put away his pride and prejudice and learn his Father's mind.¹

The meaning of Christianity, as Paul saw it, is that the life lived on earth by Jesus Christ, "the image of God," is to be lived on in all his followers, united to him by faith, and that his Church is the organ by which the great world of humanity is to be drawn to share in this, the life of the New Age.

¹ C. Harold Dodd, *The Meaning of Paul for To-day*, pp. 15, 16.



SUMMARY

In the fourth Gospel and in the first Epistle attributed to John we have a presentation of Christianity from the standpoint of "the Word made Flesh," the main purpose of which appears to have been to counter Gnostic speculations that made the humanity of Jesus a mere appearance. The essential thought, based on the Pauline mysticism, is that Christ shares the life of God, and came into this world to communicate this life to men. The conception of "life" appears to be Jewish and ethical rather than metaphysical. The Johannine writings mark an advance on Paulinism, in that Jesus Christ is regarded as revealing in his own person the nature or character of God himself; and also in the clear identification of the work of the living Christ with that of the Spirit. His life in men is the life of God, that is, of love; a Christian is one who is being made perfect in love.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOHANNINE INTERPRETATION

WE have seen that the deeper and more mystical thoughts of Paul were not assimilated by the bulk of simple-minded believers in Christ. But, as Christianity gradually gained adherents in the Græco-Roman world, Paul's ideas, particularly those that raised Jesus Christ to the rank of a pre-existent and heavenly Being, were accepted and even accentuated by some who thought they found in them material for constructing a Christian philosophy. In Asia Minor especially the "Gnostic" tendency was strong. It was probably against some foreshadowings of it that Paul himself had warned the Church at Colossæ, when writing from his prison at Rome about A.D. 62 (Col. ii.). Exaggerating his antithesis of "flesh and spirit," and his refusal to know a "Christ after the flesh," the Gnostic teachers were in danger of losing the heart of Christianity—"emptying it of positive contents," and making it "a mere form of theosophic speculation."¹ They thought of Christ as a spiritual Being who could not have degraded himself by taking a body of "flesh and blood," which, Paul had taught, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv. 50). His presence on earth was that of the mere appearance or phantom of a man; it was not possible that he could have really died upon the Cross.

The first serious "heresy" in the Church was that which denied, not the divinity of Jesus, but his real humanity. The dangers of the "Docetic" view appear to have been recognized by the Church at Ephesus, one

¹ Percy Gardner, *The Ephesian Gospel*, p. 81. Compare McGiffert, *The Apostolic Age*, pp. 502-505.

of whose leaders felt impelled, on their behalf, to set forth anew some features of the life and work of Jesus, and to draw out what, in the light of a lifetime of Christian experience, he believed to be their inner meaning. Who was this leader, the author of the Gospel and first Epistle called by the name of John? Had he been himself an actual disciple of Jesus, or did he merely draw on the recollections and teaching of such a disciple? This is one of the unsolved problems of New Testament study.¹ The fourth Gospel displays such a minute and accurate acquaintance with the conditions and practices of Jewish religious life in Palestine that (in my own view at any rate) it must be held to rest upon the authority of a Jew who had lived in that country before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. There are also many life-like touches which point to his having been an actual disciple of Jesus. The difficulty of supposing that this authority was not himself the writer of the book is that it displays a remarkable unity of style and thought, and no two critics agree as to what portions of it should be assigned to the writer and what to the authority who is supposed to stand behind him. Whoever he was, his was certainly a master-mind, perhaps the greatest of all the minds inspired by Christ. His design was to present Christianity, not in Jewish dress and as the cult of a Jewish sect, but as a religion for the whole world. His

¹ The problem of authorship is much too difficult for discussion here. That the ordinary tradition, which assigns both books, along with the Apocalypse, to John the son of Zebedee can no longer be held, seems to the present writer certain—especially in view of the tradition attributed to Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis about A.D. 130, that John the son of Zebedee, as well as his brother James, was “killed by the Jews” (Acts xii. 2. For the extant fragments of Papias see Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 527-535.) Papias alludes to another John, “the Elder,” who may be the author of the two brief letters 2 and 3 John, and possibly also of 1 John and the fourth Gospel. It is conceivable that he may have been “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and yet not one of the twelve. The Apocalypse, written by one John—“a prophet” (Rev. xxii. 9), who never claims to have been an Apostle or companion of Jesus, is certainly by a different hand.

main appeal is to the Greeks, and he shows a sympathy with their point of view which it cannot have been easy for any Jew to attain.¹ Assuredly he treats with sovereign freedom both events and discourses, and we must beware of insisting that everything happened just as described. His work should be regarded as an *interpretation* rather than a bare picture of the life and words of Jesus, and should be ranked, in our thought, with the Epistles of the New Testament rather than with the other Gospels. The expression of Clement of Alexandria, "a spiritual Gospel," seems exactly to describe it.

It is not possible to understand the teaching of these wonderful books, the Gospel and first Epistle of John, without some such preliminary study of the circumstances of their origin, and of the conditions in the Church which they were designed to meet. The author shows very clearly that his purpose in writing was not mainly historical but religious. "These (things) are written," he says, in concluding his story of Jesus (apart from the Appendix), "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John xx. 31).² The words indicate that while he accepted the view universally held in the Church that Jesus fulfilled in himself the Jewish Messianic hope, he felt constrained to show *how much this meant*: that Jesus was much more than a prophet or teacher, his function being to bring "life" to men. This he could do because he was in a

¹ The plainest evidence of this is his constant allusion to the opponents of Jesus as "the Jews." We also note his use of terms like "fullness" (πλήρωμα) familiar to the Gnostic thinkers, and his emphasis on their characteristic opposition of flesh to spirit, light to darkness, life to death, and so forth. "It is the mixture of the Jew and the Greek in the fourth Gospel which makes the question of its authorship such a baffling problem. The subconscious mind of the author, if we may so speak, is Jewish; the Greek spirit only affects the topmost stratum of his thought." (Johnston, *The Philosophy of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 126.)

² I recently endeavoured to set out what I believe to be the nature and teaching of these writings in a small book, *The Word Made Flesh*.

unique relation to God, which is expressed in the opening words of the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God and was God; in him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the Logos became flesh, and we beheld his glory" (John i. 1-9).

That is his main purpose: ¹ to give an account of Jesus which should do justice to the lofty ideas of his nature that Paul and others had already reached, and which were being specially emphasized by the Gnostic teachers; and yet to press with equal insistence that this heavenly Being had become flesh, had lived and died as a real man upon this earth. Whether or not he succeeded in drawing a consistent and intelligible portrait of One who was at once a real man and the Divine Logos incarnate ²—a question about which there is room for different views, according as the philosophy we hold makes it appear possible or impossible—that certainly seems to have been his desire and intention. His thought of the Logos, therefore, must have been one that left room for a real incarnation.

The history of the Logos idea is beyond our scope. It was familiar to some of the Greek schools of philosophy, and at Alexandria, especially by Philo, it had been combined with the somewhat kindred idea of the Divine "Wisdom." Philo's thoughts had doubtless spread to Ephesus, where there may well have been independent

¹ Subsidiary purposes may have been to combat certain "Ebionite" teaching which was content to speak of Jesus as prophet or lawgiver only; to replace with a deeper conception the crude eschatological expectation of the "coming" of Jesus in glory, whose delay caused many heart-searchings (2 Peter iii. 4), and perhaps the question whether after all he was the Messiah; and to set right a group of semi-Christians who were looking upon John the Baptist as the real inaugurator of the New Age (Acts xviii. 24-xix. 7; John i. 6-8, 19-37, iii. 23-30).

² The Logos is never mentioned in the Gospel after the prologue (John i. 1-18); but it is in the background of the writer's thoughts all through; and unless this is recognized some of his expressions cannot be understood, e.g. iii. 19, vi. 45, x. 8, 9, xiv. 6, etc.

developments of which we know little or nothing.¹ It is clear from the prologue that in Christian circles the teaching of "the Logos made flesh" was already familiar; and indeed it appears, in all but name, in some of the letters of Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.² But it should be remembered that outside such circles the notion of an incarnation of the Logos was not held. "The corner-stone of the Johannine theology," says Dean Inge, "the doctrine that 'the Word became flesh,' was not only not taken from Philo, but was totally opposed to his philosophy."³ What the Johannine writer is doing is to take the Pauline interpretation of the work of Christ and to re-express it, in the light of an intense realization, which Paul hardly shows, of the true humanity of Jesus.⁴ He believes that the eternal Light of God, which shines in measure in all human souls at all times and in all places, has been focused once in time and space in a real human personality.

"In the Logos," he says, "was Life, and the Life was the Light of men." If Light is one of his key-words, equally so is Life. We cannot ignore his Christology, since his main thought is that because Jesus is the Logos incarnate he can convey to men the Light and Life of God. It is in the use of such words that he makes his appeal to the Greek mind, which would gather little from Jewish conceptions like those of "Messiah" and "Kingdom of God." The Greeks, as Paul wrote, "sought after wisdom"

¹ P. Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 59. In Acts xviii. 24 mention is made of the Alexandrian Apollos coming to Ephesus.

² 1 Cor. viii. 6; 2 Cor. iv. 3-6, viii. 9; Col. i. 15-17, ii. 9; Phil. ii. 5-11, Eph. i. 9, 10, Heb. i. 1-3, etc.

³ *Practical Idealism and Mysticism*, p. 47.

⁴ I am not suggesting that there was any Docetism in the thoughts of Paul. But his mind was so full of the reality of the living Christ that the deeds and words of his Master when in the body fell into a secondary place. The only events in the career of Jesus of which he makes any frequent mention are his birth, death and resurrection.

(or philosophy), and felt the need of illumination, that they might know. There was also among many of them a hungering after immortal life. The Mystery religions, which were specially in vogue in Asia Minor, professed to satisfy both cravings—for illumination and for immortality. There is no sufficient evidence, in my judgment, that these cults exerted any important influence on the thoughts of either Paul ¹ or John; but the later writer, more than the earlier, seems to try to win their devotees, by offering them what they were seeking.

But what is the "Life" which Christ communicates to men? In one passage the author appears, like the Gnostic teachers, to identify it with "knowledge." "This is life eternal, that they should *know* thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3). But this is not really intended as a definition—rather it is a statement of how the Life is to be acquired. Two conceptions of Life, a Greek one and a Jewish, were available for the writer's use. In the Greek mystery religions Life was thought of in almost physical terms—as a sort of semi-material essence or "substance," which could enter a man's being in a mysterious or magical way and endow him with immortality. There are students who have interpreted Johannine statements in the light of this belief. One of the ablest of these, Dr. E. F. Scott, has written :

John involves himself in a view which may be described as semi-physical. The true life is regarded as a kind of higher essence inherent in the divine nature, analogous to the life principle in man, but different in quality, spiritual instead of earthly.

¹ Harnack refers to Porphyry's attack on Christianity (end of third century) as evidence that Paul belongs essentially to the world of Jewish and not of Greek thought. Porphyry, "a Hellenist of the first water, feels keener antipathy to Paul than to any other Christian." (*Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. II, p. 137.)

Ethical conceptions fall into a secondary place. Man requires to undergo a radical change not in heart merely but in the very constitution of his nature ; until he possesses himself of the higher, diviner essence there can be no thought of his participating in the life of God.¹

That is essentially a Greek view of "Life," and Dr. Scott believes that the author has inconsistently mixed it into the Hebrew or Jewish view, which is ethical and spiritual. In accordance with this, he finds that the Hebrew conception of Sin as a conscious and wilful transgression of the law of God is replaced by one that "involves no moral culpability," because it is merely "the natural incapacity of man to possess himself of the higher life"²—a condition inherent in the very constitution of his being. He also considers that the "believing," which here takes the place of the Pauline "faith" as the condition of salvation, signifies primarily an intellectual assent to the proposition that "Jesus was indeed the Christ the Son of God"—the sin which merits condemnation being nothing else than disbelief in Christ, to which those who have not the higher nature are inevitably committed. "The purely religious view is overlaid and obscured by the conception of Christianity as a speculative system, which makes its primary appeal to the logical intelligence."³

It seems vital to our purpose to get this clear. Our subject is "Christianity as Life," and we must try to understand what in the New Testament Life means. Are the Johannine writings really responsible for the Greek view which for so many centuries has prevailed in the Christian Church, that Christianity consists essentially in correct *beliefs* about the nature of God and Christ, and that the life it offers is dependent on the correct performance

¹ *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 258. Dr. Percy Gardner says, in my view more truly, that in the sacramental doctrines of the fourth Gospel there is "no trace of the magical." (*The Ephesian Gospel*, p. 212.)

² *The Fourth Gospel*, pp. 220, 221.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 98, etc.

of an intellectual process? Our answer will be influenced by our apprehension of the writer's mental outlook. If he was an Ephesian Greek, who merely worked into his ideal presentation of Christ and the Gospel some recollections of an aged disciple of Jesus, Dr. Scott's view may seem reasonable. But if, as we have seen reason to believe, he was a Jew and had been in early life a companion of Jesus, it is much less plausible. The theory that his theology is primarily Greek is bound up with the idea that his doctrine of Christ as the Logos is derived from Greek sources. As we have seen, that doctrine was taught in all but name by Paul, who seems to have been but little influenced by Greek philosophy. And Dr. Rendel Harris has recently shown that the prologue to the Gospel may be accounted for out of purely Jewish thought-material—that Christ was first identified with the Divine "Wisdom," and that this word, for the benefit of Greek hearers and readers, was altered to the more familiar "Logos."¹

Apart from the assumption that the Johannine author was, and thought as, a Greek, examination of his teaching lends little countenance to the notion that it is overlaid and confused by Greek ideas. Sin for him, as for Jesus and Paul, and for Jewish thought in general, is centred not in man's constitution but in his will. "Ye *will* not come to me that ye may have life"; "the lusts of your father it is your *will* to do"; "men *loved* the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil."² Salvation, though once spoken of in terms of the mystery religions as a "new birth," or "birth from above," is the raising into "life" of those who were (relatively) dead—the

¹ *The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel*. The change would be facilitated by the necessity of speaking of Christ as the "Son" of God. The word "Logos" being masculine, was more easily identified with "Son" than the feminine word "Sophia" (Wisdom).

² John v. 40, viii. 44, iii. 19. The expression "ye *cannot* hear my word" in viii. 43 must be understood in the light of the next verse.

"life," which is the moral nature or *character* of God Himself, being communicated to them by Jesus Christ, who shares it. *Christ brings the Divine Life to men because in moral character he is perfectly like God.* "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing."¹ Such passages fairly represent the dominant thought of the fourth Gospel, and their tone and spirit is entirely Hebraic and not Hellenic. And, if we look at the first Epistle, it is the same. The first test of a real Christian is that he "walks in the light" of God, which means "keeping His commandments," the first of which is love. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, *because we love.*"²

It is, I believe, essential for a right understanding of the Johannine teaching that we should recognize that the author thinks of God and Christ after the manner not of Greek philosophy but of Hebrew ethical religion. God for him, as for the prophets and psalmists before him, is "the Living One"; Christ shares His life, and came into this world to impart it to men. "As the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son to have life in himself"; "that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life."³ This life, which Christ shares with the Father, is not a super-essence labelled "Divinity," but *moral likeness to God*, who Himself is described, not in metaphysical but in ethical terms, as "love" (1 John iv. 8, 16).

This life, this power to love, Christ offers to communicate to men. Men are to "receive" it by coming into a right relation to Christ—an inward relation of heart and will. The path to this relation is spoken of in many ways, as "hearing," "seeing," "knowing," "believing," all of

¹ John vi. 38, v. 19.

² 1 John i. 6, 7, ii. 3-11, iii. 14.

³ John v. 26, xvii. 2.

which correspond to the Pauline "faith." The mysticism of Paul—his overmastering consciousness of union with Christ—is assumed and even deepened. Christ is the "Vine" and believers are the branches: his life-giving sap circulates through them all; if they are cut off from him their life perishes. Where the author makes an advance on Paul is in his clearer sight that this life is the very life of God Himself. Christ is made to say, "I and the Father are one"—not, as the context shows, in the sense of metaphysical oneness, which is not in the author's mind at all, but because his will is perfectly one with the will of God. The high-water mark of Johannine Christianity is in the words addressed to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."¹ Christ is the perfect revelation of God, and it is by this revelation that he communicates His life.

Another advance on Paul is that the Johannine author quite clearly identifies the risen and exalted Christ with the Spirit, the "Paraclete," who will come to take the place of Jesus in the flesh. Almost in the same breath he makes Jesus say, "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter," and "I will not leave you orphans; I come to you."² He was able to make this identification because he had transcended the popular belief, a legacy of Jewish Messianism, that Christ had *gone away* to a distant heavenly region, whence he was expected to return in outward pomp and glory. The "glory" of Jesus is his death and resurrection, and the victory over "the

¹ John xiv. 9; compare xii. 45, "he that beholdeth me beholdeth Him that sent me"; and viii. 19, "if ye knew me ye should know my Father also." That the author demands an intellectual element in "belief" in Christ—right thoughts about him—is clear from certain passages in the Epistle (1 John ii. 22, iv. 2, 15, etc.). But it is placed in a position secondary to the ethical demand, which for him is primary. Paul himself (1 Cor. xii. 3) proposes to test the quality of spiritual gifts by the attitude to Jesus of those who claim them.

² *Ibid.*, xiv. 16, 18; compare xvi. 7, 16. See above, Chapter V, p. 83.

prince of this world " which he had won by perfect obedience.¹ In one paradoxical passage the author states that " the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified " (vii. 39). He cannot, of course, have supposed that the death of Jesus produced a change in the nature of God Himself ; what he must have meant is that it would produce a change in man's *apprehension* of God. The " glorifying " of Jesus would open up to men a new and more living experience of God as the Holy Spirit, abiding with them in personal presence as their Guide and " Comforter." " Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He gave us." ²

Jesus, in his life on earth, had been the revelation of God, and the Spirit which also comes from God will continue the work of Jesus. We have here the characteristic idea of the Johannine doctrine. The work of the Spirit is to take up the message of Jesus, not merely by keeping men mindful of it, but by disclosing its inner purport and applying it in ever new directions to human needs. . . . By his doctrine of the Spirit John secures a new significance for the revelation in Christ. He has shown how the truth imparted under given historical forms can yet maintain itself from age to age—always responsive to changing needs and conditions. If we can think of Christianity as the final religion, capable of an endless self-renewal, this is due above all else to the conception of the Spirit which was first set forth in the fourth Gospel.³

We gather, then, from this brief study of the Johannine teaching, that the author starts from the Pauline basis of mystical union with Christ, the " image " of God, but develops it in the light of a strong conviction of Christ's real and true humanity. This he felt it needful to empha-

¹ John xii. 23, 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11, 33, xvii. 4, etc.

² 1 John iii. 24.

³ E. F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament*, pp. 203, 207. It is because the author of the Gospel identifies Christ with the Spirit that he feels no hesitation in ascribing to Jesus teaching like that concerning the Vine and the branches, which would have been unintelligible while Jesus was on earth, but which was true to the Church's experience and to the teaching of the Spirit.

size as against Docetic speculation, which emptied it of all reality. Christ in his own person has brought to men a perfect revelation of the character of God, who is love ; and by receiving this revelation men can share the life of God which Christ himself enjoys. His indwelling life in his people is the Holy Spirit, who abides with them as their Guide and Teacher and Comforter ; and to be a Christian is to experience the presence of Christ, and to allow him to live on, in the soul of the disciple, the life of perfect love.

PART III

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SUMMARY

The Christian Church arose out of the consciousness of unity among the first disciples of Jesus, in virtue of their common devotion to him and the one Spirit that was felt to inspire them all. Jesus himself made no attempt to establish a new organization, but impressed the spirit of humble love and service that must animate and unite his followers. This holds in the Johannine as in the Synoptic teaching. In the Book of Acts the local churches have "elders," but there is no evidence of any formal appointment. The terms "elder" and "bishop" appear to have been synonymous. In only one passage in Paul's genuine Epistles is there mention of "deacons." His usual reference is not to offices in the Church but to "gifts," especially those of Apostles, Prophets and Teachers. The Pastoral Epistles mark the transition from the informal organization of Pauline days to the Catholic Church. The unity of the primitive Church depended not on organization but on the inspiration of all its members by the Spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE study of "Christianity as Life" involves attention to the nature and development of that great historical embodiment of the religion of Jesus which we call the Christian Church. What, essentially, is the Church, and what light does reflection on its origin and history throw upon the nature of Christianity?

"The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul." In these words the author of the Book of Acts emphasizes the consciousness of unity that bound together the first disciples of Jesus. As we have seen,¹ the sense of close fellowship with one another, in virtue of their common devotion to Jesus and the one Spirit that inspired them all, was one of the most striking and significant results of Pentecost. The fourth Evangelist, writing after a long lifetime of Christian experience, carries back the thought of unity to Jesus himself, with his figure of the Vine and the branches, and the prayer "that they all may be one." Such consciousness of oneness was bound to find expression; the common life must build for itself a body through which to function.²

But, as we have seen, the disciples of Jesus had at first no thought of separating themselves from the Jewish religious system in which they had been brought up and which largely met their needs. Nor is there any clear indication that their Master before them had expected them to do so. In our oldest evangelic sources the word

¹ Chapter IV, pp. 83 f.

² Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 184: "No religious movement can remain in a bodiless condition."

"church" does not occur, nor is it found in either the third Gospel or the fourth. It is Matthew only who twice reports Jesus as speaking of a "church,"¹ and both passages must be regarded as doubtfully genuine. At the same time his warning, which appears in all the Synoptic Gospels,² that the new wine of the Kingdom will require fresh wine-skins, probably shows his foresight that the Jewish religious system as it then existed would not be elastic enough to make room for the Gospel that he brought to men. It is clear, too, that though (for the time at least) he limited his disciples' preaching to their own people,³ Jesus, in the certainty that the love of his Father went out to all men, foresaw that to Gentiles as well as Jews his message would be declared, and that by some of them it would be welcomed. "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."⁴ Mark's story of the cleansing of the temple suggests that the priests had made it "a den of robbers" by excluding from it the Gentiles for whom one court had been designed. "My house shall be called a house of prayer *for all the nations*"—the last words are recorded by Mark only. But there is no evidence to show whether Jesus consciously thought of his religion being established among the Gentiles without their first becoming Jews.⁵

¹ Matt. xvi. 18, xviii. 17.

² Mark ii. 22 = Matt. ix. 17 = Luke v. 37, 38.

³ Matt. x. 5, 6. The first Evangelist (Matt. xv. 24) makes Jesus at one time confine even his own mission to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but this limitation does not appear in the parallel Marcan story (of the Syro-phenician woman), and the incident is omitted by Luke.

⁴ Matt. viii. 11 = Luke xiii. 29 (from "Q"). Compare Matt. xxi. 43.

⁵ "He perhaps thought of the Gentiles as worshipping and serving God in the same way that the Jews did, and as taking their place with the latter, or instead of the latter, in the existing household of faith." (McGiffert, *Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, p. 27.) The fact that Jesus is reported to have spoken of the Twelve as in some way standing for "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 28 = Luke xxii. 30), seems to point to his having thought of the body of his followers as the ideal Israel, an idea which was followed up by Paul (Rom. xi., etc.).

It would seem, therefore, unsafe to assert that Jesus during his life on earth definitely envisaged the development of his Church as a separate organization. The impression that this was absent from his thoughts is confirmed by the entire lack of directions as to its control and administration. Priesthood and sacrifice after the Jewish pattern he never speaks of; it is even doubtful whether his selection of the Twelve implies that he contemplated any separate ministerial order to which should be committed the conduct of the public worship of God. Of this, and of his supposed institution of Sacraments, we shall be speaking later; meanwhile it should be noted that the institution of Sacraments is improbable unless he had a separate Church in mind. What he clearly did was to impress on his followers with the utmost earnestness, by example as well as word, that a spirit of loving and humble service must animate all their relations with one another; and he apparently left them to discover for themselves, under the guidance of his living Spirit, such forms and rules as would best minister to their individual and corporate life with God. It was his task to set up among men the Kingdom of God; the forms in which the spirit of the Kingdom should find embodiment he left to his heavenly Father.

If we take it that the passages in Matthew where Jesus is reported as speaking of a Church are founded on some genuine utterances of his, but have been expanded or modified in the light of later experiences,¹ we may conclude that one of his purposes was to prepare his disciples for

¹ The possibility may perhaps be suggested that some of these doubtful passages are reports of prophetic utterances inspired by the Spirit in the early Church, and therefore not devoid of authority in so far as they are in harmony with the mind of Jesus. For example, Matt. xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I in the midst of them*," would have been unintelligible while Jesus was in the body. But the saying expresses one of the deepest and most inspiring truths of collective Christian experience. (See above, Chapter VI, p. 127 n.)

taking responsibility for others, and making important decisions, affecting the spiritual life of all his followers, when he should be no longer with them in the body. The foundation on which the Church is to be built consists of true disciples who have faith and insight like that by which Peter has just recognized him as Messiah. Because he has this insight, Jesus commits to Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven"—a figure which he amplifies by speaking of the power to "bind and loose": that is, to declare with God's approval what rules and modes of life are to be made binding on his followers. This power is afterwards extended to others (xviii. 18), and there is no reason, apart from a traditional interpretation, to limit it to the Twelve. The clearest example of its exercise is the great decision about the non-imposition, on the Gentile believers, of circumcision and the detailed observation of the Mosaic law, recorded in Acts xv. This decision is sent out in the name of "the apostles and elder brethren," and was not arrived at by the Apostles until after consultation with, and securing the concurrence of, other experienced disciples, and indeed of the "multitude" mentioned in verse 12.¹

In the second of the two Matthean passages about the Church (Matt. xviii. 15-20),² the spirit that should animate it is hinted at in the word "brother." "If thy brother sin against thee, go show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." The Church is to be a *brotherhood*, a larger family of those who recognize the same Father and obey the same Lord. There is no suggestion of any distinction among them of

¹ "Not only was discipleship the foundation of apostleship, but the Twelve who were Apostles were precisely the men who were most completely disciples. Here we are brought back to the meaning of the building of the Ecclesia upon St. Peter and his fellows." (Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 20.)

² Quite possibly the word "church" here means simply the local synagogue congregation.

clergy and laity ; no hint that only through a separated class of ministers spiritual gifts can be mediated to the rest. An official hierarchy, in other utterances attributed to Jesus, is expressly forbidden ; the only greatness among his true followers is greatness of love and service, such as, in John xiii., Jesus himself shows by washing his disciples' feet. When two of the Twelve came asking for special places of honour in the Kingdom, to the indignation of the others, Jesus told them all :

Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them ; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you ; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant (*διάκονος*), and whosoever would be first among you shall be slave of all (*δοῦλος*). For verily the Son of man came not to be waited on but to wait on others, and to give his life a ransom for many.¹

Be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on earth ; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters ; for one is your master, even the Christ.²

In the light of such teaching, it is not too much to say that the leading principles and methods of the " Catholic " Church, and of some others that do not use the adjective, are condemned beforehand by Jesus himself. So far as he gives any directions for the constitution of the community of his disciples, it is to be a pure theocratic democracy, in which God alone is Father and Christ is the only Master ; where all his true followers have equal consideration, and the only honour is that which springs from the service of others.

It is very significant that in the fourth Gospel and the first Johannine Epistle, written at a time when ecclesiastical

¹ Mark x. 42-45 ; Matt. (xx. 25-28) follows this almost literally. In Luke (xxii. 24-27) the same teaching is connected with the contention among the disciples as to which of them should be the greatest,

² Matt. xxiii. 8-10.

ideas and practices were in progress of rapid growth, the absence of teaching about the Church is as marked as it is in the Synoptics. This can only point to a conviction in the mind of the author that the ecclesiastical developments which he saw going on around him were not in harmony with his "spiritual" conception of the Gospel, or with what he took to be the mind of Jesus. To the woman of Samaria it is declared that no holy places are needed for the worship of the Father, who only desires that men should worship Him in spirit and in truth.¹ The approach of Samaritans to hear him is welcomed by Jesus as evidence of a harvest, wider than that from Jewish fields, which his disciples should shortly reap; ² and he assures his friends that he has other sheep than those belonging to the "fold" of Judaism, whom also he must bring in, that there may be *one flock* with one Shepherd.³ Yet even here he does not suggest that they will build up a new "fold," though times of persecution will come when they will be "put out of the synagogues" ⁴—a word which implies that till this happens they will continue their Jewish worship. He prays for the Twelve, and also for "them that shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee." ⁵

Beyond this thought of the oneness of all his true disciples, and the mutual love that binds them together, the Johannine Jesus does not go. The Twelve are "sent" by him into the world, even as he has been sent into the world by the Father.⁶ He breathes upon his disciples as a

¹ John iv. 23, 24.

² *Ibid.*, 30, 35.

³ *Ibid.*, x. 16 : *ποίμνη*, not *αὐλή* as in the earlier part of the verse.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xvii. 2. What is said above seems to be true, even though the author of the Epistle of James calls the Christian assembly a "synagogue" (James ii. 2).

⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii. 20, 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xvii. 18, xx. 21. In the case of the latter utterance, which immediately precedes his breathing on his disciples, it is not clear that these consisted of the Twelve alone,

figure of the Holy Spirit who should be their unseen Comforter, and promises them discernment into the spiritual condition of others. But he indicates for them no official superiority, and hints at no official organization.¹ In the author's first Epistle he addresses the whole body of true believers in Christ as those in whom the Spirit manifestly abides, and who have in themselves the "anointing" that teaches them the truth.²

The conditions of the nascent Church, as it appears in the Acts of the Apostles, have been already in part indicated.³ As is suggested in the Synoptic Gospels, it is "a pure theocratic democracy, in which God alone is Father and Christ is the only Master." There is entire freedom for the exercise of the prophetic gift, when Christians are gathered together, by any believer, man or woman, who is inspired by the Spirit of Christ.⁴ The Church has its natural leaders, like James the brother of the Lord, who seems to have taken the place at Jerusalem of his martyred namesake the son of Zebedee.⁵ He is never called "bishop," and was obviously only the chief "elder."⁶ These "elders" are frequently mentioned, as in Acts xx. 17, where Paul sends from Miletus for "the elders of the church" at Ephesus. In his address to them he calls them "bishops" or overseers—made such, he does not say by any human appointment, even his own, but by

¹ Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, Vol. II, p. 371.

² 1 John iii. 24, ii. 27.

³ See above, pp. 86 ff.

⁴ Acts xi. 27-30, xiii. 1-3, xv. 35, xviii. 27, 28, xxi. 8, 9, etc.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xii. 2, 17, xv. 13 f., xxi. 18.

⁶ Paul perhaps reckons him as one of the Apostles (Gal. i. 19), but there is no record of any formal appointment. He is not even stated to have acted as president at the Conference in Acts xv. "There is no reason to suppose that during the lifetime of James there was any official ruler, or even any regular governing body, in the church at Jerusalem," (McGiffert, *op. cit.*, p. 554.)

"the Holy Ghost" (verse 28).¹ The phrase "elder brethren" in Acts xv. 23 indicates that the "elders" were, as would be natural, the older members of the church, either in age or in standing as Christian disciples. Only in one passage are they said to have been appointed by Apostles. In Acts xiv. 23 the historian, relating Paul's early missionary efforts in certain towns of central Asia Minor (as we now call it), states that he and Barnabas "appointed for them elders in every church." Luke does not imply that he had personal knowledge of this, and may simply be taking the eldership as an obvious fact and giving what he supposed to have been its origin. He himself does not mention the eldership in connection with any of the particular churches except Jerusalem (Acts xv. 4) and Ephesus (xx. 17). In all probability it was simply a copy of the eldership familiar to the Jews in their synagogues, where, as Hatch has shown, the Elders acted as judges and administrators.² The first Christian churches seem to have simply continued the arrangements to which they were accustomed. When a new church was gathered in any locality, the missionaries who founded it would be likely to indicate which of its members were in their judgment fitted for taking special responsibilities; but there is no evidence of any formal appointment, by the "laying on of hands" or otherwise, still less of the transmission of spiritual gifts by any such ceremony. At the great church at Antioch, well known to Luke, and second in importance only to Jerusalem, we hear nothing about elders at all. What was done would seem to have been natural, spontaneous and informal; the selection and appointment of a separated priesthood was very far

¹ "In the New Testament the word ἐπίσκοπος (bishop or overseer) as applied to men is mainly, if not always, *not* a title, but a description of the elder's function." (Hort, *op. cit.*, p. 232.)

² *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, pp. 58 ff.

removed from the Apostles' thoughts.¹ So long as the Church remained a society of inspired people, a special priesthood was unthinkable.

The Epistles of Paul confirm the impression that the Church in Apostolic days was fluid, without any fixed or formal organization. In his genuine Epistles there is only one allusion to "bishops." When writing to the Philippians, in what is possibly his latest extant letter, he addresses "all the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."² The term "bishops" is in the plural, and it is generally admitted that, as in Acts xx. 28, it is equivalent to "elders," and points, as Hort says, to their function of oversight. Used as it is in conjunction with the word "deacons," that is, those who serve, it may possibly indicate that the church at Philippi, which by that time (say A.D. 62) may have consisted of more than one congregation, was developing an organization in advance of some of the other churches: at any rate no such terms are used in connection with the churches whom Paul addresses at Corinth, Ephesus, Colossæ, or even Rome. The Epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth, probably in the later fifties, and it contains no mention of bishops or deacons at either centre; though in the greetings in chapter xvi. (which may have been addressed not to Rome but to Ephesus) it would have been natural to allude to them had such offices existed.³ What Paul does speak of is

¹ McGiffert, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Compare J. Oman: "The Apostolic Church was wholly compacted in brotherhood and at the same time profoundly individual. That combination was made possible by a gospel which was at once the most personal of all possessions and the mightiest force to break down self-regard." (Art. "Church" in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. III, p. 621.)

² Phil. i. 1. The greater part of the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Tim. and Titus) is almost certainly post-Pauline. For these see below, p. 143.

³ For example, in verse 7 Andronicus and Junias are greeted as "of note among the apostles"; and in verse 1 Phœbe is called "a servant (or deaconess) of the church at Cenchreæ."

not *offices* in the Church but “gifts”—aptitudes for service of different kinds bestowed on believers by the one Spirit. His chief classification of those who had received these gifts is threefold—“Apostles, Prophets and Teachers.”¹ It may be well to examine what he means by each of these words.

“Apostles,” persons *sent* by God with a special commission for service, were the early missionaries of the Church—those who carried the message of Jesus into localities not yet touched by it. Frequently, of course, it means the Twelve—those who had been intimate associates of Jesus—with the addition of Paul himself. But in the New Testament the word is often used in a wider sense, almost indistinguishable from that of “evangelist,” and this accords with its use in sub-apostolic writings like the *Didaché*.² The commission that constituted an Apostle was inward, not outward, and its evidence was the life of devoted and successful missionary activity.

The “Prophets” were men (and women) who were believed to speak under the inspiration of the living Spirit of Christ, like Agabus, of whom we twice read in the Book of Acts, and the four unmarried daughters of Philip the Evangelist.³ Paul recognizes that women equally with

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 28; compare Eph. iv. 11. Other “gifts” follow, including the power to work miracles, to heal, to govern, and to speak with tongues. The list is evidently illustrative, not exhaustive. As it would be absurd to suppose that Paul thought of the recipients of some of these gifts as officials, it is probable that he did not think of any of them in that way.

² Barnabas is called an “apostle” in Acts xiv. 14, Silvanus and Timothy in 1 Thess. ii. 6 (though the title seems to be denied to Timothy in 2 Cor. i. 1 and Col. i. 1), Andronicus and Junias in Rom. xvi. 7. These facts indicate that it is hardly possible to interpret 1 Cor. ix. 1 in the sense that Paul considered knowledge of Jesus in the flesh as a requisite qualification for an Apostle. In Rev. ii. 2 we read of some who claimed to be Apostles and were found upon trial to be unworthy of the name.

³ Acts xi. 28, xxi. 9, 10. A list of “prophets and teachers” at Antioch is given in xiii. 1.

men might be Divinely called to pray or prophesy in the church gatherings. The author of 1 Tim. will not allow a woman to "teach"; and Paul himself disapproves of their taking part in public religious discussions.¹ Their service seems to have been less wide than that of Apostles; some of them probably ministered in the main to their own congregations and did not travel far. It is quite obvious that in the case of the Prophets there was no human appointment at all; the compulsion to "prophesy" was purely inward, and its evidence was that the recipients of it "edified the church" by "speaking unto men edification and comfort and consolation."² Paul expects of them sobriety and understanding: "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," in contrast to the ecstatic or frenzied condition of those who "spoke with tongues," and whose utterances he considers as of far less value than prophecy.³ He regards both Apostles and Prophets as special recipients of Divine inspiration,⁴ and therefore as able to declare with some authority what is the will of God. This is no doubt why, in "Ephesians," Paul himself, or someone else who writes with almost equal insight and power, says that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."⁵ The power of receiving direct inspiration from God Himself (or from Christ, or the Spirit, for Paul is not at pains to distinguish their several activities)⁶ was obviously not

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 5, 13, xiv. 34 f.; 1 Tim. ii. 12.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4.

³ *Ibid.*, xiv. 22-33.

⁴ Though this (in some measure at least) he looked upon as the normal endowment of every Christian: "to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the (common) good" (1 Cor. xii. 7).

⁵ Eph. ii. 20; compare iii. 5. It appears to me possible that Paul himself wrote this letter; if so, it contains his most developed thoughts about the Church as the "body" of Christ. Yet even here there is no insistence on formal arrangements or organized authority; the body of Christ will be "built up" as each member uses, in love, the gifts conferred upon him by the one Spirit for the good of all (Eph. iv. 1-16).

⁶ Rom. viii. 9-11.

regarded as having been conferred by any ordination ceremony; no such thing is ever mentioned or hinted at by Paul.¹

The "Teachers" seem to have been persons who had the power of setting forth the way of life, but with more reflective thought, and less dependence on immediate inspiration, than was attributed to the Prophets. They would hardly, like the Prophets, be expected to bring *new* revelations from God. Their expositions would no doubt be largely based on the Old Testament, read in the light of the Christian belief that it all pointed to Christ. No rigid line can be drawn between "Prophets" and "Teachers"; all we can safely say is that the human element had more place in the work of the latter than of the former. But to the mind of Paul the gift of teaching was hardly, if at all, inferior to that of prophecy; indeed, in two passages he puts "wisdom" before "knowledge" and "teaching" before "revelation."² It was no doubt largely through the exercise of this gift that the churches were preserved from extravagance and wild disorder. Religious instruction he saw to be essential to a strong church, that should be able to test the utterances of prophets and estimate their worth.³ But his letters contain no evidence that any were appointed or ordained to do the work of Teachers; there was room in the Pauline churches for the service of anyone who possessed the necessary power of clear thought and convincing exposition.

The preceding study, brief and imperfect as it is, may be enough to show that, in the judgment of Paul, no formal or stereotyped organization was needed for the building up, or the preservation in unity and strength, of a

¹ Apart, that is, from the Pastoral Epistles, where "laying on of hands" is twice mentioned (1 Tim. iv. 14, 2 Tim. i. 6) in connection with the reception of a "gift."

² 1 Cor. xii. 8, xiv. 26.

³ McGiffert, *op. cit.*, pp. 528 ff.

Christian church. To him the living Christ was so real, in his own experience and in that of his converts, that he could trust the preservation of unity to the one Spirit who inspired them all.

The Pastoral Epistles reveal a further stage of development. In their present form they probably belong to the later years of the first century; but there are indications, especially in 2 Timothy, that they embody some genuine Pauline fragments. The language, thought, and general outlook of the writer are different from those of Paul. "Faith" is rarely spoken of as a living personal relation to Christ, but rather as a deposit of sound doctrine.¹ The Church here is called "the house of God," and "a pillar and stay of the truth."² The threefold order of ministry, consisting of bishops, presbyters (or elders) and deacons, is certainly adumbrated.³ Though neither Timothy nor Titus is actually called "bishop," each is regarded as having a position of authority. Timothy is said to have received his gift by "prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,"⁴ and Titus has been "left in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city."⁵ It is however obvious that as the writer of the passage just quoted goes on to enumerate the qualities required of a *bishop*, he does not clearly distinguish between bishop and elder. Probably he thought of the presiding elder as *the* bishop *par excellence*. Historically these letters are of great importance as marking the transition from the primitive Christian community of inspired disciples of Jesus—held together by

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 6, vi. 21; 2 Tim. i. 13, Titus i. 1, etc.

² 1 Tim. iii. 15. "Each living society of Christian men . . . bears its part in sustaining and supporting the one truth common to all." (Hort, *op. cit.*, p. 174.)

³ *Ibid.*, iii. 1-7, v. 17-20, iii. 8-13. Verse 11 of the last passage shows that the deacons might be women.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 14.

⁵ Titus i. 5.

faith and love without any elaborate organization or human authority, other than that which naturally attaches itself to persons of ability and devotion—and the Catholic Church of later centuries.

Our brief study of the Church in the New Testament shows us, then, that the Christian community in its early days was essentially the Fellowship which consisted of all true followers of Jesus, united by living faith in a common Lord, and by the inspiration of his living Spirit in their individual and corporate life. Paul's insistence on the unity of the Church shows that he, and probably other leaders with him, thought of it as *one whole*, and of each congregation, or group of congregations in one centre of population, not as a fragment but as the Church itself, whose vital essence was in every part. "The Church" was, in their thought, composed, not of local churches, but of men and women in whom Christ truly dwelt. "Wherever two or three were gathered together, there the Church was in all its power and dignity, in all the promise of the Kingdom of God, and in possession of the blessings of that Kingdom."¹ But this unity was inward and vital, not external or governmental. It depended on the one Divine Life that flowed through the whole, as the sap circulates through the vine. There is no sign in the New Testament of the monarchical bishop, ruling with an authority derived by formal ceremony from the Apostles,² or of a clerical and priestly order, through which alone spiritual blessings could be mediated to the laity. In the Church of the first century there was no laity, for all true

¹ J. Oman, "The Church," in *E.R.E.*, Vol. III, p. 618. "The credit of emphasizing this truth," he says, "is due to Sohm." Compare Hort, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 169.

² The attempt has often been made to find such a ruler in the "angel" of each church addressed in Rev. ii. and iii.; but it is almost certain that the "angel" is simply the personified character of the church itself. (C. A. Scott, *Century Bible*, "Revelation," p. 134.)

disciples of Christ were priests. "The Kingdom of God," says Hatch, "was a kingdom of priests. . . . Only in that high sense was priesthood predicable of Christian men. For the shadow had passed ; the Reality had come : the one High Priest of Christianity was Christ." ¹

¹ Hatch, *op. cit.*, p. 142

SUMMARY

Church organization shows a human element, which cannot be ascribed to the Divine purpose, or regarded as determined by necessity. (1) In *Authority and Discipline*, each church seems to have appointed, at first mainly for the work of administering charitable gifts, a committee of presbyters or elders, whose president eventually became "the bishop." Deacons were, later on, appointed to assist the bishops. Growth of the bishop's power : the work of Ignatius in fostering order, and of Irenæus in countering "heresy" by insisting on the deposit of faith, of which the bishop was guardian. Attempt to preserve order and unity by material safeguards rather than by trust in the Spirit. (2) In *Worship and Ministry* the early Church (its gatherings being modelled on the Synagogue) gave much freedom for inspired prophecy and teaching ; as the sense of inspiration died, its place was taken by an ordered service, conducted by the bishop or presbyters. The failure of Montanism to restore freedom. Experience of the Society of Friends. (3) *The Sacraments* of Baptism and the Eucharist cannot be shown to have been instituted by Jesus. Baptism practised by his first disciples as a mark of admission to the Church. Rise of the practice of infant baptism, with superstitious ideas of baptismal regeneration. The Last Supper in Mark and Matthew a preparation for Christ's death, not an institution. Paul (followed by present text of Luke) the only authority for a permanent rite. Meaning of the Johannine teaching on the flesh and blood of Christ. Separation of the Sacrament as a solemn rite from the common meal (or Agapé) due in part to Paul. Testimony of Ignatius, the *Didaché*, and Justin Martyr. Influence of the Mystery cults in fostering magical ideas, and of the notion of Transubstantiation in increasing the power of the priesthood. The Church should be free to dispense with the formal observance of these rites if its life can be better maintained in the Reality without the symbol.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH IN DEVELOPMENT

WAS the Christian Church a Divine or only a human institution? This challenge¹ should be met by believers in the living God, in His revelation of Himself by Jesus Christ, and in His control of human history, who yet decline to place upon Him responsibility for the course that human history has taken. The true answer to the question would seem to be that the Church is partly both. The Christian life was to be a life of loving fellowship and corporate service, in which the highest good of the individual man and woman could only be found in a right relation not only to God but to other believers and to humanity; and such corporate life must inevitably build for itself some kind of organization. So far we may freely grant that the establishment of the Christian Church was a part of the Divine purpose. But the precise forms that in the course of history the organization assumed, and the causes that produced them, reveal so much of human frailty and imperfection that it is extremely difficult to regard them as designed by God or moulded according to His plan.

A useful comparison may perhaps be found in the priestly and ceremonial developments of the ancient Jewish Church. It was once taken for granted by Christian teachers that the whole of the Levitical Law was directly revealed by God to Moses. Study of the facts of Hebrew and other religious history has made this view no longer

¹ As thrown out, for example, by Dr. A. J. Mason in *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry* (edited by H. B. Swete, D.D.), pp. 3-5.

tenable. The practice of Sacrifice was common to most religions, and some of the forms it took in Israel can be matched elsewhere. The ceremonial institutions are seen to have had a gradual growth. It may be that sacrifice itself is an outcome of, and a witness to, the perennial hunger of the human heart for God ; and so far it may be regarded as having had a higher than human origin. Yet it was not through ceremonial, but through prophetic inspiration, that God spoke most clearly and forcibly to Hebrew souls ; and no one can read the greater prophets' denunciations of the sacrificial system as it existed in their days ¹ without being convinced that the priestly development was less Divine, and more human, than the prophetic. The religion of Jesus and his Apostles was certainly in the full line of the prophetic movement ; and the Christianity which took shape in the Catholic Church may well be regarded as less Divine and more human than that religion—as, indeed, in large measure, a reversion to the lower and cruder type. We must, it is true, beware of attempting to separate the Divine and the human by rigid walls ; but, if we allow that the Church in essence was of God, the form it assumed must be regarded as mainly of man.

It is often assumed, even by students of Christian history who are quite free to criticize ecclesiastical institutions, that their development on the lines which in fact they took was in fact inevitable : that, granted the necessity of securing and safeguarding order and unity in the Church, no other course was possible. This assumption I, for one, am not prepared to grant. It seems to render criticism superfluous, and it cuts at the root of reform ; for it is of no use to protest against that which was bound

¹ For example, Amos v. 21-24, Hosea vi. 6, Isa. i. 11-17, Mic. vi. 6-8, etc. ; more especially Jeremiah's bold denial that the sacrificial system was Divinely appointed (Jer. vii. 22). It seems that an increasing number of students of the prophets are coming to believe that Jeremiah meant exactly what he said.

to be. Not so did the great prophets look upon the sacrificial system of Israel, nor the great Christian reformers upon the abuses they gave their lives to abolish. The course of the Church's development was, I submit, inevitable only in the sense that *men played for safety*, refusing to "live dangerously" through lack of faith in the Spirit of God. It might have been well worth while to run the risk of temporary disorder and division, for the sake of a larger harmony, if only there had been present a deeper insight and a stronger faith. As a great Christian scholar says :

The natural man likes material guarantees, and would rather not trust anything to God that can be managed by man. An institution with official rule seems a better security than a fellowship with Divine gifts. . . . That which obscures and perverts [the right principles of Christianity] is the lack of faith, the wish to trust as little to God as possible, the desire to walk by sight, and by faith only when we cannot help ourselves.¹

So much it seems needful to say to indicate the point of view from which I propose to sketch, in baldest outline, some leading features of the development of the Church's organization. The subject is difficult, because from about the time of the martyrdom of Paul (c. A.D. 64) on to the time of Irenæus (c. 180) we have little direct information as to what happened. Our sources are mainly the Pastoral Epistles, the *Didaché*, or "Teaching of the Twelve," the *Shepherd* of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas—the dates of which are all uncertain ; and also the letter from the Church of Rome to that of Corinth, known as 1 Clement, about A.D. 95, the Epistles of Ignatius and that of Polycarp, about 115, and some writings by Justin Martyr

¹ Dr. J. Oman, art. "Church" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. III, pp. 622, 623. Dr. Hatch says that the Catholic Church "is Divine as the solar system is Divine" (*op. cit.*, p. 20), but the two things are not of the same order. The solar system is purely physical and mechanical, and its Divine harmony has not been marred by the perversity of human wills.

about 150. From Irenæus onwards our information is much fuller, but by that time the forms of Church organization were largely fixed and their origins forgotten. The course of their early development is partly conjectural, but its main outlines, thanks to the researches of modern scholars, have been in some measure recovered. I propose to treat them under three headings: (1) Authority and Discipline, (2) Worship and Ministry, (3) the Sacraments. It is obvious that these departments of organization overlapped, and that they cannot be treated in rigid separation from one another.

(1) AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE.

We have seen¹ that the first step in the organization of the Church arose out of the practical need of providing for the physical necessities of the poorer believers at Jerusalem. "The Seven" are never called Deacons, but the kind of function for which they were appointed probably gave form to what was afterwards called the diaconate. It was here a case of division of labour between those whose main work it was to spread the Christian message, and those entrusted with the task of distributing equitably among the members of the fellowship the funds or goods provided by the more well-to-do. We should always bear in mind that the prevailing expectation of the Master's early return in glory made all such arrangements merely provisional. Dr. Hatch has shown that, during the first century of our era, not only in Judea but throughout the Roman Empire, there was much economic strain and poverty; and the fact that many of the early Christian converts were gathered from the poorer classes of society made the right administration of "charity" a general problem—for the Christian communities even more than for other religious and social confraternities that then

¹ See above, Chapter IV, pp. 87 f.

existed.¹ It appears to have been the need for administering equitably the common funds of the local brotherhoods and their charitable gifts that, more than anything else, made it necessary to appoint in each centre an executive committee of trustworthy members to whom was entrusted the duty of seeing that everything was done "decently and in order." Outside of Judea, the division of labour between preachers of the Gospel and financial administrators does not seem to have been generally followed. The members of the executive committee were called in their general capacity as a governing body by a name familiar both in Jewish synagogues and in other fraternities: "*presbyters*" or "elders"; and, in their special capacity as overseers and administrators, "*episcopi*" or "bishops."² The first term is believed to indicate the station, the second the function, of the same persons.

We shall consider presently the reasons why the term came to be applied to a single officer, the head of each church and afterwards of a whole "diocese." He was no doubt at first the presiding presbyter, or chairman of the committee. As the churches increased in size and the duty of administering their affairs became more complex and onerous, a new order of assistants became common in the shape of "deacons": but there is no clear evidence as to its origin. Deacons are only once alluded to by Paul (Phil. i. 1), and in 1. Tim. their qualifications are hardly distinguishable from those of the bishops or presbyters. Their precise functions it is difficult to delimit. It

¹ Hatch, *op. cit.*, chapter ii. "The poverty in the midst of which they grew was intensified by the conditions of their existence. Some of their members were outcasts from their homes; others had been compelled by the stern rules of Christian discipline to abandon employments which that discipline forbade. In times of persecution the confessors in prison had to be fed; those whose property had been confiscated had to be supported; those who had been sold into captivity had to be ransomed. Above all, there were the widows and orphans."

² *Ἐπίσκοπος* (*episcopus*) means literally "overseer."

seems that as the power of the presiding bishop increased, the deacons became his assistants in the administration of both charity and discipline, as well as in ministering at the sacraments; and that the functions of the presbyters underwent a corresponding decline. The latter remained in theory the council of the bishop, and acted as judges in cases of moral delinquency and disputes between Christians. Moreover, as the number of congregations in a particular city and under a single bishop increased, the general oversight of the several congregations was shared among the presbyters, each of whom became more and more like a modern parish priest.¹ When the idea of the clergy as "priests" became common, about the third century, by analogy with the ancient Jewish economy the deacons were thought of as "levites"; and the "threefold ministry" of bishop, presbyters and deacons became the settled order of the Church.

The seat of authority for the exercise of discipline in the churches was at first the assembly of believers; their constitution was democratic. This is clear from Paul's letters to the Thessalonians and Corinthians, where he puts upon the whole church the duty of dealing with those who "walk disorderly"; though he urges his readers to have a high regard for "them that labour among you and are over you in the Lord."² As the churches increased in size, this delicate duty necessarily devolved upon a smaller number than the whole body, and was naturally undertaken by the committee of presbyters. These would seem at first to have been elected by the church itself,

¹ Hatch, *op. cit.*, chapter iii. He shows (p. 78) that the primary function of presbyters or bishops was government or guidance (compare Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 159), and that the duty of preaching was a later addition. In Eph. iv. 11 the writer separates "pastors" and "teachers"; and in 1 Tim. v. 17 it is said that presbyters who not only "rule well" but "labour in the word and teaching" are worthy of double honour.

² 1 Thess. v. 11-15, 2 Thess. iii. 6-16, 1 Cor. v.

though it is obvious that the founder of a church would not feel debarred from indicating those who in his judgment were best fitted to discharge the duties of office. There is, as we have seen, no evidence of formal appointment by the laying on of hands or otherwise. But any important action was for a long time undertaken under the sanction, and in the name of, the whole church. Thus the letter of the Roman church to that at Corinth known as the first Epistle of Clement (A.D. 95) was written to protest against the action of the latter church in deposing its presbyters. We do not know the merits of the quarrel, but possibly it arose because the presbyters were thought to have unduly strained their authority by denying liberty of utterance to "prophets and teachers" who claimed direct Divine inspiration. However this may be, it is important to note that the writer, who is generally acknowledged to have been Clement, does not name himself and says nothing about any single "bishop" at either Corinth or Rome. He certainly magnifies the authority of the presbyters, and hints at their having been appointed by Apostles. But he does not claim any right on his own behalf, or on that of the Roman church, to *dictate* to the Corinthians what they are to do in the matter. His letter indicates the stage at which authority was passing from the church assembly to its officials, its constitution changing from a democracy to an oligarchy.

It was Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in Syria, who, more than anyone else in the sub-apostolic age, promoted the further development from oligarchy to monarchy, by magnifying the office and authority of the president or single bishop. It is possible that his main purpose was not this, but rather, assuming the headship of a bishop in each of the Asiatic churches whom he addresses,¹ to counter the

¹ "The bishop" is alluded to in each of the Asiatic letters, but not in that to the Romans, which makes it practically certain that there was still (c. A.D. 115) no single bishop set over the church at Rome.

tendency to hole-and-corner gatherings and associations, by exhorting the members of these churches to work always in frank harmony with, and subordination to, the bishop and the other presbyters. Whatever his intention may have been, it is certain that the effect of his admonitions, for which in one case he claimed prophetic inspiration,¹ was to hasten the tendency, already manifest in the churches, especially those of Asia, to magnify the functions, and increase the authority, of the president of the council of presbyters.²

This tendency was intensified by Irenæus, a native of Asia Minor and a disciple of Polycarp, who was appointed bishop of Lyons (in Gaul) in A.D. 178. His chief work is an elaborate book on the *Refutation of Heresies*, which is extant. What he was mainly concerned to do was to combat the Gnosticism that was growing in the Church among its more intellectual members in many parts of the Roman world. We had occasion to allude to Gnosticism when speaking of the purpose of the fourth Gospel and the first Epistle attributed to John.³ As the second century advanced it grew into the most serious danger the Christian Church ever had to face—the danger that the Gospel of the saving love of God, revealed in the life and death and resurrection of a real historic Person, should be lost in a chaos of speculative metaphysical ideas. The question at issue involved the whole meaning of Christianity—whether

¹ *Philadelphians*, 7. On this utterance is founded the rather fantastic theory that "the development of the Christian hierarchy was due to the exhortations of Christian prophets." (Swete, *The Church and the Ministry*, p. 30.) Prophecy was not very likely thus to take steps to put an end to its own existence.

² In the letter of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, to the Philippian church, written a little later than those of Ignatius, there is mention of presbyters and deacons at Philippi, but not of any "bishop." Philippi was, of course, in what we now call Europe, and was a Roman rather than a Greek city.

³ See above, Chapter VI, p. 117.

it was an experience of redemption and a life of love, or a system of philosophic notions.

Irenæus and his orthodox followers met the danger in what seemed the easiest way : by appealing from a fancied esoteric teaching, alleged to have been given by Christ to a few, to the truth held by the Church at large—"the catholic and apostolic faith." This teaching, they said, was that of the Apostles, who had handed it on as a sacred deposit of which the bishop of each church was the guardian. To him (through his predecessors) had come down, from the laying on of Apostolic hands, a "*charisma veritatis*,"¹ the gift of knowing and declaring the truth on which the Church was founded and in which its unity consisted. Thus arose the notion of the Apostolic Succession, that perennial source not of unity but of division in the Church of Christ. This topic we cannot pursue. The point I wish to urge is that, if Irenæus and his successors saved the Church from the calamity of immediate division, they did so at the cost of building up its unity on false foundations, which would lead to worse disintegration in the future : the foundations of uniformity of belief and rigidity of organization. They tacitly admitted that Christianity *was* essentially a system of beliefs—but a system which they could guarantee to be *true* while that of the "heretics" was false. Christianity came to be thought of as a creed ; and henceforth the authority of the bishops of the Church was largely used to rule out and cut off from the fellowship all those whose opinions were not "orthodox" according to the standards formulated by a majority of votes at successive Councils of bishops.

A further point is that the historical foundation on which Irenæus and those who followed him based the episcopal authority was, in the main, fictitious. They probably knew less of the early history of Christian insti-

¹ Hatch, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 99.

tutions than we know now.¹ However useful it may have been for their immediate purpose, it was on a *conjecture* that they based their theory of authority for ruling and directing the Church. They supposed that Jesus had committed official authority to his twelve Apostles, and they to a bishop in each church by the laying on of hands ; but the truth of this supposition is not borne out by a study of the facts. Such authority as the New Testament shows the Apostles to have exercised was purely moral, not official ; it was, as Hort says, “ a claim for deference rather than a right to be obeyed.”² Paul’s conception of his own authority is exquisitely illustrated in his letter to Philemon on behalf of the runaway slave Onesimus. He lays upon Philemon no command, but is sure that in love and gratitude he will do what Paul wishes for the offender. And so with the idea that authority was delegated by apostles to bishops. “ Before the middle of the second century we have no evidence that apostolic authority was thought to devolve on any ministry set up by or with the sanction of the apostolic founders of the Church ; nor yet that any given method of ordination was of the essence of episcopal office in any local church.”³ In dealing with

¹ Irenæus, for example, did not know that the words “ bishop ” and “ presbyter ” originally referred to the same persons. He alludes to Paul as meeting at Miletus the bishops and presbyters from Ephesus and the other cities, assuming that one city could only have one bishop (*Hær.* III, xiv. 2). Clement of Alexandria, a little later, was equally ignorant of the facts. (*E.R.E.*, art. “ Ministry (Early Christian),” Vol. VIII, p. 660.)

² Hort., *op. cit.*, p. 85. “ There is no trace in Scripture of a formal commission [to the Apostles] of authority for government from Christ himself. Their commission was to be witnesses of himself, and to bear that witness by preaching and healing ” (p. 84).

³ Bartlet and Carlyle, *Christianity in History*, p. 302. The *Didaché* says (xv. 1) : “ *Elect therefore for yourselves* bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord.” Hatch shows that in early days the church officials, if they needed it, were supported out of voluntary offerings and were not paid fixed salaries. Many of them supported themselves by farming, trade, or the practice of medicine. “ There is no trace of the later idea that buying and selling, handicraft and farming, were in themselves inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister ” (*op. cit.*, p. 151).

the question of Authority in the Church we cannot, as some "Catholic" writers, both Roman and Anglican, appear to do, begin with Irenæus and take his statements at their face value; we are bound to go further back, to the New Testament itself and such writings as have survived from the sub-apostolic age.

But was there, after all, any alternative to the line of policy adopted by Irenæus and his successors to save the Church from disintegration? With all humility, I am bold to believe there was. There is in all really Christian souls what the late Mr. Clutton-Brock called a "scent for truth"—in more orthodox language, the inward witness of the Spirit of God—which, if they will attend to it, makes them aware, as wild birds know what berries will feed and what will poison them, whether any new teaching ministers or does not minister to the Christian life. "The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you; if that which ye heard from the beginning abideth in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father."¹ Such teaching, apparently, had fallen on deaf ears; the inward witness of the Spirit was not the reality in the second century that it had been in the first. The leaders of the Church need not have hidden what they believed to be the truth, nor compromised with what they were sure was error. If they had directed less energy to the endeavour to guard the citadel of truth by a wire entanglement of creed and organization, and had trusted more to the power and vitality of truth itself; if they had devoted all their strength to helping their fellow-Christians to maintain the inward fire, and to test any new teaching by the light it shed in their souls; if they had had the faith and courage to take the risk of a deeper trust in God and in His witness in the human soul—what would have happened? There might indeed have been temporary division and apparent disaster;

¹ 1 John ii. 27, 24.

but the Church would have been established on its true foundation, the Gospel of Jesus would not have been obscured, and much of the strife and bitterness that marked the succeeding centuries might have been avoided. It was because the Church had begun to lose faith in the Spirit that it sought to maintain its unity by the outward safeguards of episcopal authority and priestly domination.¹

(2) WORSHIP AND MINISTRY.

Religion is a corporate as well as an individual life, and this life the higher religions have always sought to maintain and express by the collective worship of God. In Judaism and Christianity especially public worship has taken a "spiritual" as contrasted with a ritual form. So long as the Temple lasted, Judaic religion had of course its ritual element in the temple sacrifices. But this ritual was, for spatial reasons, only available for the few; and the many had found a means of supplying their spiritual needs by the worship of the synagogue. This worship was much more closely connected with the prophetic element in Hebrew history than with its priestly development; and as Christianity had its roots in the prophetic movement it naturally found in the synagogue a ready means of corporate expression. Jesus himself had attached importance not to ritual or cultus but to the spirit in which offerings are made to God.² His first followers at Jerusalem, while as devout Jews diligent in attending the temple services,³ were also accustomed to meet together from day to day at private houses for "the breaking of the loaf and prayer."⁴ No

¹ Harnack shows that in the early Church "the consciousness of this [unity] was most vigorous and vital in the very ages during which no external bond as yet united the various churches." It was maintained by public prayers for the whole Church, by intercourse through epistles and travelling preachers, and by gifts from more prosperous churches to those in need. (*Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, pp. 225 ff.)

² Matt. v. 23 f.

³ Acts ii. 46, iii. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 42, 46.

doubt they continued on the Sabbath day to attend the Jewish synagogue, but in course of time they added to this, or substituted for it, gatherings on the first day of the week, which they called the "Lord's Day" in memory of his resurrection.¹ The procedure at these gatherings would naturally be modelled on that of the synagogue, with which they and many of their early converts, even when these were Gentiles, were familiar.² The synagogue worship was not conducted by a caste of professional clerics; it was popular and democratic, having no connection with the priesthood; its Rabbis were learned laymen.³ There was liberty for any man qualified by character and education to read and expound the Scriptures, at any rate if invited to do so.⁴ In the early Christian assemblies, if what we read of those at Corinth is a fair sample, "freedom of prophesying" was carried to great lengths. The Spirit had been poured out "on all flesh"; the very mark of a Christian was possession of (or by) the Spirit; and anyone who had received the Spirit might be inwardly prompted to speak or offer prayer in the Christian assembly. "When ye come together," says Paul, "*each one* hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation."⁵ This freedom was extended to women as well as men. Whatever Paul may have meant by enjoining silence on women (1 Cor. xiv. 34), it is clear he did not intend to exclude them from public prayer or prophecy, for in another passage (xi. 5) he directs that a woman praying or prophesying must have her head veiled. At Corinth it is clear that freedom was tending to disorder; that is why Paul insists that the edification of the church must have the first claim, and that to this end

¹ Acts xx. 7, 1 Cor. xvi. 2, Rev. i. 10, etc.

² Acts xiii. 43-48, xiv. 1, xvii. 1-4, etc.

³ See art. "Worship (Hebrew)" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. XII, p. 794.

⁴ Luke iv. 16, 17, Acts xiii. 15, etc.

⁵ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

everything must be done "decently and in order."¹ What he claimed, as Dr. McGiffert points out, was freedom for the Spirit, not uncontrolled liberty for man as man.² But he never once hints that the public worship of the church is to be carried on solely by its officials, whether presbyters or deacons, who indeed had been appointed, as we have seen, for a wholly different kind of service.

Beyond this glimpse of the church at Corinth, we have little direct evidence of the conduct of public worship in apostolic and sub-apostolic days. About A.D. 112 Pliny as governor of Bithynia wrote to the Emperor Trajan for advice as to his treatment of the Christians in his province. He reported that he had learned from some of them, probably renegades, that they were accustomed to assemble on a stated day (Sunday, doubtless) before dawn, and to recite "a hymn (*carmen*, any liturgical utterance) to Christ as to a God."³ He also stated that they publicly bound themselves with an oath (*sacramento*) to abstain from evil deeds. He does not mention the offering of gifts and the glad thanksgiving or Eucharist which formed a large part of the public worship, as is clear from other sources of information. One of these is the *Didaché*, which has been already mentioned. It contains a brief Directory, intended probably for the use of some of the Syrian churches, and its date may be early in the second century. Christians are to meet together on the Lord's day to break bread and to give thanks, confessing their transgressions and being reconciled to one another if there has been any quarrel, that their sacrifice may be pure (xiv.). The little manual is of extreme interest as marking the time when the early prophetic ministry was beginning to break down, and when a more official procedure was being sub-

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 12, 33, 40.

² McGiffert, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

³ Snatches of such hymns are perhaps preserved in Eph. v. 14, 1 Tim. iii. 16, 2 Tim. ii. 11-13.

stituted for it. "Apostles" and "prophets" still travelled from church to church, but not all were genuine. If they stay too long, or ask for money, they are to be rejected as false prophets. The bishops and deacons whom the churches are recommended to elect for themselves are beginning to take the place of inspired prophets: "for they too minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers, therefore despise them not" (xv.). Directions are given concerning Baptism and the Eucharist, which we shall have to notice later, but nothing is here said of any officials who alone are competent to administer these rites.

By the time when Justin Martyr wrote his first *Apology* (say A.D. 150) a further stage had been reached. He writes :

And on the day called "of the sun" there is an assemblage of those who dwell in cities or country places into one spot, and the memorials of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, to a convenient length. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president by speech admonishes and encourages to the imitation of these good things. Then we all stand up together and send up prayers; and when we have ceased from the prayers bread is brought forward and wine and water, and the president sends up prayers likewise and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the people assent, saying the Amen; and each one partakes in the distribution of the things over which thanks have been given, and to those who are not present they are sent through the deacons.¹

The gradual substitution of a fixed order of "service," in the hands of Church officials, for the original freedom of the Spirit, was due in part to decay of the genuine gift of prophecy, and in part to the consequent loss of faith in the power of the Spirit to preserve order and harmony. It is not possible here to trace the efforts of the Montanists,² with whom the great African Tertullian eventually associ-

¹ *Apology*, 65, 67.

² For Montanism see Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, chap. iii, and H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, chap. iv.

ated himself, to recover the early freedom and break down the rigid walls of official authority. Montanism failed, partly because its worked-up fervours rarely showed the marks of real inspiration, but also because the organization of the Church had already become too strong. It was in the end stamped out as "heresy." But I cannot agree with Dr. McGiffert when he claims that the principle of order and edification, impressed by Paul, could have no other issue than "a regular and stereotyped order of services," and "the appointment of certain persons to take charge of the services and to see that the established routine is followed."¹ Had the efforts of the Church leaders been directed to maintaining and developing the spiritual gifts of themselves and their people, retaining Paul's confidence that the rule of the one Spirit, if faithfully obeyed, can never lead to disorder, real "prophecy" need not have died out in the Christian Church, and the official class might never have become a priesthood. The essential New Testament conception of "the priesthood of all believers," in virtue of the presence in them of their one High Priest, need never have been wholly lost.

For what it is worth, the experience of the Society of Friends may be adduced as evidence. With all its weakness and failure, it has found means of harmonizing freedom for the Spirit with the interests of order and edification. Its failure to win the great bulk of Christian people to its mode of life can be shown to have been due to other causes than excessive trust in the Spirit and unwillingness to substitute human arrangements for Divine inspiration. In the face of difficulties both without and within, it has maintained for nearly three centuries a Christian organization of the simplest character, with no distinction of clergy and laity, with no routine of service, and with freedom in all its "meetings for worship" for the Spirit of God to

¹ McGiffert, *op. cit.*, pp. 524 f.

work through the fellowship of human souls united in seeking after God. Whatever success it has achieved in the building up of Christian character and in the service of men must be traced in very large measure to the inspiration of its quiet gatherings for public worship. In the conduct of these meetings it has maintained two principles of immense value, which the rest of the Christian Church has well-nigh lost: first, a waiting silence, in fellowship before God, with trust in His Spirit to call forth utterances of prayer or praise or exhortation that may minister to the awakening of the careless and the edification of believers; and, second, the freedom for women, equally with men, to share in this vocal exercise. There are, in its history and in its present experience, facts which no student of the nature of Christianity, and of its expression in the life of a corporate body, can afford to overlook.¹

(3) THE SACRAMENTS.²

While any adequate treatment of this vexed subject is impossible within the limits of the present work, it carries us so deeply into consideration of the meaning of our religion that we cannot ignore it. All that is possible is to try to place it in perspective with the general outlook from which the nature of Christianity is here considered.

The Sacramental principle, taken in its broadest sense, is an aspect of the Symbolism that underlies all attempts to express the invisible realities of faith. The constitution of our minds is such that these realities can only be presented in figures drawn from the experience of the senses;

¹ See especially *What is Quakerism?* by the present writer (1917), and *Christian Life, Faith and Thought in the Society of Friends* (official, 1922). Also Rufus M. Jones, *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers* (1927).

² The word *sacramentum* on its religious side was a translation of the Greek *μυστήριον*, "mystery" (something that carries a hidden meaning), and that word is still used for these rites in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

and of this we have a witness in all metaphor and poetry, and most of all in the parables of Jesus. Facts of the outward and sensible life can be made the vehicle by which a higher truth is suggested and given form.

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

Some symbols, like the flag of our country or the ring in marriage, may carry with them such rich and vivid meaning that they seem to be more than symbols, and their loss is felt as if it were the loss of the reality for which they stand.

The Roman Church has recognized many Sacraments, but only two have held the mind of the Church at large : and this for the reason that they alone are usually supposed to have been instituted by our Lord himself. The supposition is so general and deep-seated that to question it seems to many like a mere vagary of unbelieving criticism, akin to the question whether Jesus ever lived at all. Nevertheless it must be examined, in the light of all the evidence there is. To Roman Catholic "Modernists," indeed, it may seem unimportant ; for them the philosophic basis of religion is pragmatic, and that is "true" which, whatever its origin may have been, ministers to spiritual needs. The "*lex credendi*" is, as Tyrrell put it, the "*lex orandi*." But the general Christian mind does not reason in this way. If the basis of the Sacraments in a supposed Divine institution were removed, if it were shown that they grew up in the Church as the outcome of causes within the human sphere, it would be generally felt that their authority was gone, and there would be repugnance to regarding their observance as simply a matter of expediency. But expediency, in the sense of religious value in experience, would then be the only ground for maintaining them.

The subject may be treated broadly, as an aspect of the revolt of the prophetic mind against religions of form and ritual. Jesus, as we have seen, was in the full line of the prophetic movement, and carried it to its consummation. For him the outward form was insignificant: "the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."¹ It is the tree that must be made good, and then its fruit will be good.² Not that which goes into a man can defile him (or, we may add, can sanctify him), but that which comes forth from his heart.³ The whole attitude of the Master to outward rites was such that the presumption is certainly against his having established new ceremonies for observance by his followers. Overwhelming evidence would be required to prove that he did so, and even then the question of his consistency would have to be faced. Such action on his part is even less likely if, as we have seen reason to believe, he gave no conscious thought to the organization of a Church separate from that of the Jewish community within which he and his followers maintained their religious life. And, indeed, when the existing evidence is examined by the light of impartial criticism, it melts to almost nothing.

(a) *Baptism*.—It is obvious to all students of the Gospels that this rite, as a symbol of repentance and cleansing from sin, was not instituted by Jesus himself. It was practised before him by John the Baptist, whether or not he derived it from a Jewish ceremony for the admission of proselytes.⁴ John probably used it to mark those who were "sealed" for the coming Kingdom.⁵ As some of the closest dis-

¹ John vi. 63.

² Matt. xii. 33.

³ Mark vii. 15.

⁴ That such a ceremony was common in the first century, at least in some parts of the Jewish world, seems to be proved by W. Brandt, art. "Baptism" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. II, p. 408.

⁵ The idea of Baptism as a "seal," probably with an eschatological significance, is found in the early homily known as 2 Clement (*Ibid.*, p. 385). Also see above, p. 39.

ciples of Jesus had been followers of John, the most we can say is that he allowed them to continue the practice of baptizing those who joined them, as a public declaration that they shared the faith in Jesus and in his message. He himself received baptism at the hands of John, as an admission not that he felt the need of personal repentance, but probably that he wished at the outset of his public career to identify himself with sinful humanity.¹ The fourth evangelist records that early in his career, while allowing his disciples to baptize, Jesus did not practise the rite himself.² In the same Gospel he is reported as having previously said to Nicodemus that "except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Some scholars of repute are in doubt whether the words "water and" in this passage formed part of the original text.³ Assuming that they are genuine, it is clear that the whole emphasis is on the Spirit and not on the material element; the passage must be regarded as an echo of Ezek. xxxvi. 25. After this, all mention of baptism disappears from the Gospels except in the sense of suffering or martyrdom.⁴ The command to baptize in Matt. xxviii. 19, with its echo in the second-century ending to Mark's Gospel (Mark xvi. 16), cannot be, in its present form, a genuine word of Jesus. Baptism with the Trinitarian formula is unknown in the Acts, and Paul cannot have known of such a commission when he declared that he was not sent to baptize.⁵ "According to Acts, it never

¹ This is an inference from the question of John and the reply of Jesus in Matt. iii. 13-15, which, whether historical or not, indicates at least what in the first century Jesus was supposed to have felt. See above, Chapter I, p. 20.

² John iv. 1, 2.

³ They seem to have been unknown to Justin Martyr. See Lake, art. "Baptism (Early Christian)" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. II, p. 384.

⁴ Mark x. 38, 39, Luke xii. 50.

⁵ 1 Cor. i. 17. Further, Eusebius the Church historian (early fourth century), who frequently quotes this passage, gives it usually in a simpler

entered into the mind of the Twelve to leave Jerusalem and evangelize the Gentiles until circumstances forced them to do so; to accept Matt. xxviii. 19 is to discredit the obedience of the Twelve beyond all reasonable limits."¹

We have, therefore, strong grounds for the assertion that the rite of baptism was not ordained by Jesus Christ. The author of the Acts assumes throughout that converts to the "Way" of Christ were baptized; but the cases of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Cornelius make it clear that these were to be baptized because they were already Christians at heart, not that they became Christians because the rite had been performed on them.² So far from his regarding baptism as "regenerating," he carefully records that Simon the magician, after baptism, was declared to be "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."³ In Acts xv. he recounts the decision reached by the Church at Jerusalem that circumcision is not to be enforced on the Gentile believers. The "decree" in which this decision is announced makes no mention of baptism as a substitute for circumcision. In the Epistles of Paul baptism is taken for granted, but it is never enforced.⁴ In the first Epistle attributed to John the conditions of real as contrasted with nominal Christianity are stated and repeated with the utmost care, but baptism is never once mentioned. The New Testament is true to the prophetic tradition of the non-necessity of formal rites.

So far as evidence exists, the Baptism of which we read in the Acts and the Epistles was intended for, and confined to, *converts* to Christianity and their families. There is

form, without any mention of baptism or the Trinity (*E.R.E.*, Vol. II, p. 380). It is not easy to believe that this simpler text can be a corruption of the fuller one.

¹ Foakes-Jackson and Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity*, Part I, Vol. I, p. 328.

² Acts viii. 36-38, x. 44-48.

³ *Ibid.*, viii. 13, 23.

⁴ Unless in Eph. iv. 5, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," in an Epistle which may perhaps be sub-Pauline.

no sign that the early Church thought it needful to baptize the children of Christian parents who were in the Church when the children were born—a fact which has often been overlooked.¹ Paul goes so far as to assume that if only one parent is a believer the children are “holy”—that is, are to be regarded as objectively within the Church.² The practice of infant baptism arose as a consequence of superstitious ideas concerning the efficacy of the rite, which we shall be considering immediately; and it altered, as Hatch points out, the whole character of the Church. A Christian came to be thought of as “a baptized person,” without direct regard to his personal faith or moral character.

A further change was the result of the superstitious notion of “baptismal regeneration”—the idea that baptism in itself, if performed according to strict rule, effects a change in the spiritual condition or *status* of the individual.³ It was doubtless in part the effect of the Mystery cults which were much in vogue throughout the Empire when the Church was in development, and which had many points of resemblance to the Christian societies. In some of these cults there was a solemn initiation by baptism with water or blood, or both, which was believed to confer illumination and some kind of “new birth” into immortal life. The practice of infant baptism arose through fear that if a person died before the rite had been performed he would suffer some permanent spiritual loss.⁴ The idea that the ceremony itself had potency made it inevitable

¹ It is recognized by Hatch (*op. cit.*, pp. 121, 139 f.), and by Clow (*The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 136, 137); apparently also by Harnack (*Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 483).

² 1 Cor. vii. 14.

³ Possibly there is a trace of such an idea in Titus iii. 5, “He saved us by the washing (or bath) of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

⁴ On the other hand, the fear of committing mortal sin after baptism led some to postpone the rite as long as possible.

that great importance should be attached to the exact method in which it was performed—the form of words used in confession by the baptized person, and in baptizing by the ministrant—and to the due authorization of the latter. All this led the Church away from the simplicity and spirituality of primitive Christianity, and increased the power of the developing priesthood, the authority of an official caste.¹

The change in method from complete immersion to sprinkling—from a symbol to the symbol of a symbol—was also momentous, but need not now detain us. It is recognized in the *Didaché* as purely a matter of expediency.² If the Church, on grounds of expediency, could rightly sanction such a change, why cannot it, with equal legitimacy, dispense with the rite altogether if that should seem expedient?

(b) *The Lord's Supper*.—So many solemn associations have gathered around the Mass and the Communion Service that to many devout Christians the raising of a doubt whether this ceremony was instituted or ordered by Jesus Christ seems like the attempt to tear the heart out of the Christian life. Nevertheless the question has been raised and must be faced. It is no doubt to many a severe shock when they are told that the Gospels in their original form

¹ Baptism in the Acts is not represented as a function that can only be performed by a duly authorized official. Saul of Tarsus was baptized apparently by Ananias, a simple "disciple at Damascus" (Acts ix. 10, 18), and Cornelius and his family by some of the "brethren" who accompanied Peter to Cæsarea (x. 23, 48). The earliest form of baptismal confession, from which sprang the Creeds, appears to have been that attributed to the Ethiopian in Acts viii. 37 A.V. (omitted from R.V.), "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

² "Baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living [i.e. running] water. But if thou hast not living water, baptize in other water; if thou canst not in cold, in warm. But if thou hast not either, pour water upon the head thrice, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Did.* vii.). Nothing is said as to who may rightly perform the ceremony.

contain no mention of the institution of a rite for permanent observance in the Church. Yet such is the case; and the fact is frankly admitted by many of the best scholars.¹ The idea that Jesus initiated a ceremony was certainly a very early tradition in the Church, but it cannot be shown to have come from anyone who was with him on the last evening. We have two original accounts of what occurred—those of Mark and Paul respectively. Mark (xiv. 22-25) says that Jesus took bread and a cup of wine, and after giving thanks distributed them among the Twelve with the words, "This is my body; this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many." Matthew (xxvi. 26-28) with slight additions follows Mark almost verbally. There is nothing in either of these narratives, which probably depend on Peter's recollections, to suggest that Jesus was instituting a form to be observed as a *memorial* of his death; his whole intention seems to have been, by this most solemn act, to *prepare* them for it by uniting them in the strongest ties of fellowship with himself. Luke's account (xxii. 14-20), as it stands, is a combination of Mark's story with that which Paul had already given in 1 Cor. xi. 23-26, and is obviously confused—the cup being mentioned twice, before and after the bread. There is every reason to believe that the words in verses 19-20—"which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you'"—have been inserted from 1 Cor. xi., and are not part of Luke's original Gospel. They are omitted from Westcott and Hort's Greek Testament. So that Paul remains our only authority for the words of institution, and he certainly was not present at the Supper. When he says, "I received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you," he can hardly be claiming to have had

¹ For some of these see art. "Eucharist" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. V. p. 544.

a direct revelation of what occurred. Probably it is a strong assertion of his belief in the truth of the tradition that had come to him.

It is as remarkable as it is significant that in the fourth Gospel, where the words and acts of Jesus on that memorable evening are recounted with much fullness, there is no mention whatever of the bread and wine. The place of the ceremony is taken by that of washing the disciples' feet, with words that might equally well have been understood as a "this do": "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example."¹ The omission of the incident by this evangelist appears to have been deliberate. He probably desired, as when he stated that Jesus did not baptize, to offer a very quiet warning against the importance the Church was beginning to attach to ceremonies—as Ignatius did, when, within a few years of John's writing, he called the Eucharist "the medicine of immortality."² It has indeed been supposed that John is pressing a "high" view of the Eucharist when he makes Jesus say, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves."³ The most we can rightly say, I believe, is that the language which he here attributes to Jesus was probably suggested by that which was becoming common concerning the Eucharist; but he takes pains to explain that it is not material but spiritual "eating and drinking" that is referred to. "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."⁴ When Ignatius called the Eucharist "the medicine of immortality," it was probably in a mystical sense only and by metaphor;⁵ but his words had

¹ John xiii. 14, 15.

² *Ephesians*, 20.

³ John vi. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vi. 63.

⁵ This is confirmed by a passage in his letter to the Romans (7): "I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who was of the seed of David; and for a draught I desire His blood, *which is love incorruptible*."

a dangerous tendency. They served to strengthen the drift towards the superstitious idea that the consecrated elements in themselves conveyed the Divine life to men, continued the Incarnation by presenting each communicant with the actual flesh and blood of Christ, and repeated on each "altar" his sacrificial death. But it was not before the end of the second century that this conception became dominant in the Church. By that time the whole idea and practice of "the Lord's Supper" had undergone a radical alteration.

In early Christian days it was really a "supper"—a social meal taken by a company of believers in a private house or elsewhere, at first daily, and, later, on the first day of the week, with a solemn thanksgiving and "breaking of the loaf." It seems to have been Paul who began the separation of the rite from the meal by his warnings to the Corinthian church (in 1 Cor. x. and xi.) that a disorderly supper, in which the first comers satisfied their hunger while those who came late got nothing, could not be a real "supper of the Lord." It is he who first speaks of the ceremony as a *memorial* of the death of Jesus, and he clearly wished it to have a very solemn character as the "communion of the blood and body of Christ."¹ But he still calls it a "supper," and says nothing about any words of "consecration," or of the celebration being conducted by an official class of ministers. In the *Didaché* a form of words is recommended as a thanksgiving (Eucharist) over the cup and over the bread, which are to be shared only by the baptized. But it is still a meal, and another thanksgiving is to follow when the participants are "filled"—which, if a prophet is present, may be phrased in his own words. Nothing is here said about the death of Christ, and nothing about an official ministrant.²

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16. The "cup" is here put before the "bread," while in the next chapter the order is reversed.

² *Did.* ix., x.

In Justin Martyr's *Apology* (c. A.D. 150) the thanksgiving is uttered by the "president," and the bread and wine are spoken of as not "common," but as "*in some sense* the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus."¹ The thought and practice of a common meal (or *Agapé*, love-feast) continued long. Ignatius had spoken indifferently of Eucharist or *Agapé*;² but gradually in most of the churches the meal was separated from the Sacrament; and finally, owing to the disorder which sometimes attended it, the real "Lord's Supper" was suppressed as profane by the Trullan Council, A.D. 692.³

The growth of the notion of Transubstantiation was no doubt largely due, like that of the supposed magical efficacy of baptism, to the influence of the Mystery cults, where the initiated were accustomed to eat and drink together with rites somewhat similar to those of the Christians. The main purpose of these widely-spread "mysteries," which in the second century presented a formidable rival to Christianity, was the attainment of "salvation" from the ills of life by communion with a God regarded as "Saviour."⁴ It is significant that Paul, especially in his later letters, uses terms familiar in these cults: he calls his Gospel a "mystery," and believers (possibly) "initiates."⁵ Yet it would be wrong to infer

¹ Clow, *Church and Sacraments*, pp. 201, 202.

² He calls it "breaking of bread" in *Eph.* 20; "Eucharist" in *Philad.* 4 and *Smyr.* 6, 8; and "Agapé" in *Smyr.* 8. The word *Agapé* in the sense of love-feast is only found in the N.T. in Jude 12.

³ Clow, *op. cit.*, p. 176; *E.R.E.*, Vol. I, p. 172.

⁴ "The three chief characteristics of mystery religion were, first, rites of purification, both moral and ceremonial; second, the promise of spiritual communion with some deity, who through them enters into his worshippers; third, the hope of immortality, which was secured to those who were initiated." "The Catholic conception of Sacraments as bonds uniting religious communities, and as channels of grace flowing from a corporate treasury, was as certainly part of the Greek mystery-religion as it was foreign to Judaism." (Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, Vol. I, p. 227.)

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 1, 6, iv. 1; Col. i. 27, Phil. iii. 15, etc. The word *τέλειοι*, translated "perfect," was used for initiates into the mysteries.

that not only his words but his thoughts were influenced by them ; indeed, in 1 Cor. x. he draws a sharp contrast between " the table of the Lord " and the pagan feasts which he calls " the table of devils," warning his readers against having anything to do with these. But the later Church conquered the Mysteries by absorption, and made many of their ideas its own. " It was," says Dean Inge, " as a mystery-religion that Europe accepted Christianity." In one respect in particular this development enormously increased the power of the " priesthood," and concentrated attention on the method of ordination ; for only one who had been " validly " ordained could perform the mighty miracle of transubstantiation.

Here we see the final severance of the Church which called itself Catholic from the pure and spiritual religion of Jesus Christ and his first Apostles. The simple fellowship of true believers has become a mighty organization bound with fetters never forged by him ; an organization that used ruthlessly its spiritual authority (and even, when that was open to it, called in the aid of the civil power) to cut off from the fellowship of Christ all whose professed belief or church arrangements were not perfectly in accordance with the pattern fixed by the majority, in council, of the ruling caste of bishops. And still there is need of protest against the attempt to define a Christian by outward marks, such as baptism by water and participation in a particular ceremony. If a " visible " Church was ever part of the Divine intention, it can only have been in the sense that no Christian can fully ripen the fruits of the Spirit, the first of which is love, in isolation from his fellow-believers. Baptism and the outward rite of communion were not, as we have seen reason to believe, instituted for his Church by Jesus Christ. If they are to maintain their place, it can only be on the ground of the higher expediency : because they do in fact minister to

the deepest spiritual needs of men. There should be room in the Fellowship of Christ not alone for those who perform them in different ways and under varying auspices, but even for those who, like the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army, sincerely believe that they get nearer to him in spirit by dispensing altogether with the outward symbols. I venture, with some knowledge of the facts, to demur to Dr. Clow's assertion that the worship of the Society of Friends "fails, except with a limited number of sympathetic temperament, to inspire a vivid faith and to quicken spiritual passion, as the hour spent at the Lord's Supper never need fail to do."¹ Insignificant as its numbers are, there may be found within its membership as wide a diversity of thought, and as many "varieties of religious experience," as in any other of the Christian bodies; and very deep communion with one another through their living Head is often experienced by its adherents in their meetings for worship. In my own belief the Society of Friends has still a work to do for the purification of our religious life. To it, perhaps, has been committed a living testimony to the world that a Christian society can maintain its vitality, and discharge its service for humanity, with a minimum of form and organization, in simple dependence on the Spirit of Jesus Christ, like that of the early Church. The continuance of these rites in the Church is a matter not of obedience but of expediency. The Church has at various times exercised freedom in altering the ceremonies both of Baptism and the Eucharist, as new circumstances and new needs seem to have required. Should it not claim an equal freedom to dispense with their formal observance altogether, if it should appear that its life can be better maintained by seeking the Reality without the symbol?

I may conclude this long chapter with a quotation from

¹ Clow, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

an able writer on missions. He asks what should be the attitude of Western Christians, if a great native Church, say in India, taking a similar view of the spiritual nature of Christianity to that indicated in these pages, should wish to discontinue the practice of Baptism.

Suppose (he says) that the Indian Church should feel that owing to the emphasis on Baptism the word "Christian" has come to signify merely those who have undergone this rite and the children of such, that very largely the word is losing for India its moral significance, and that Christians are looked upon too often simply as another caste, and not as a people with a distinctly superior kind of life because in touch in a unique way with a unique Power; and that in order to correct this impression they wanted publicly to announce that Baptism is not necessary for becoming a Christian or a member of a Christian church. Would you want your missionaries to consider this question absolutely on its merits? ¹

¹ *Whither Bound in Missions?* by Daniel J. Fleming, Ph.D. (New York, 1925), pp. 96 f.

SUMMARY

Various answers may be given to the question Why should a Church exist ? (1) Man's nature is essentially social, and Christianity is the religion of love, which can only find expression in a community and in co-operative service of men. (2) The Kingdom of God has yet to be established in the world, and the Church is required as God's instrument to this end. Since the first century the Church has, with some lapses, recognized its Missionary calling. The Protestant churches were slow in awakening to this, but have made great progress in the last century. Changes in their conception of the aim and methods of Missionary activity. Growth of the desire to build up independent and self-propagating native churches ; and to co-operate in all endeavours to bring the social, industrial and international life of western nations under the sway of Christ's principles of love. Experience proves that a pure and spiritual Christianity is effective even among backward races. (3) A collective voice is needed, calling men in the name of Christ to practise his principles in their group relations.

CHAPTER IX

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH

BEHIND the subject we have been considering—the growth and development of the Christian Church as an organized society, Divine in purpose and intention, but very human in the forms it has assumed—there lies the question, Why should there be a Church at all? Is it an essential part of Christianity? If, as the purpose of this work is to show, Christianity is an experience to be entered into and a life to be lived, does it require a Church for its proper development and expression? Cannot a man, ideally at least, be a perfect Christian by coming, through Jesus Christ, into a right relation with God and with men in general, without becoming a member of any definite Christian society? If all the actual communities that call themselves Christian contain faults and imperfections, may he not live the Christian life in a spirit of “benevolent neutrality,” identifying himself with none of them?

We may, I think, readily grant that no existing Christian society, nor all of them together, can be rightly regarded as the true or ideal Church of Christ. That Church can only consist of all human souls that are in a living relation to Christ—or to God through him, though they may not be aware of what they owe him—and in whom his Spirit is actively at work. That there are many such outside the limits of the recognized Christian “folds” no one whose mind is open to the facts can for a moment doubt. There are, besides, the multitude of true followers of Christ who have passed beyond the veil of time and sense, and whom we believe to be “with him” eternally. The real Christian

Church is therefore much larger than any "visible" organization or group of organizations, and is known to God only. But, while recognizing this, we should (in my judgment) be wrong in concluding that the "visible" or organized Church is insignificant, that it has in the Divine economy no special functions to discharge, or that we can disregard it in our enquiry into the true nature of the Christian religion. That a Church is necessary for the full blossoming of the flower of Christian life, and the due ripening of the "fruit of the Spirit," can I think be easily shown by even a cursory examination of human nature and experience.

(1) In the first place, man is essentially a social being, and his best powers are not developed in isolation from his fellows. We men and women are not "discrete" atoms. Each one of us owes such qualities as we possess, not alone to the disposition and innate capacities with which we were endowed at birth, but to the training and discipline we have received from home and school, and in the wider world of human affairs. This is as true of the spiritual side of our nature as it is of the physical and intellectual. While the "life" that Christianity essentially is, is inward and personal—rooted in our own particular response to the Divine Fatherhood revealed in Christ—it is also collective and corporate. Whatever we know of its power in our own lives has come to us very largely through the teaching and example of others; and it is through intercourse with our fellows that our personal experience of God is meant to grow and develop. In isolation it is wont to become starved, as the mournful record of the lives of the hermits bears abundant witness.

Evelyn Underhill has said that "individualism and gregariousness are both represented in the full life of the Spirit; and however personal its achievement may seem

to us, it has also a definitely corporate and institutional aspect.”¹ In the life of religion, as in that which we mistakenly call “secular,” our individualism requires to be tempered by the larger life of the body. Without this our personal apprehension of Divine truth may easily make us opinionated, and even fanatical and divisive; and that in proportion to its vividness and strength. It is no accident that Paul often follows his loftiest delineations of the range and power of the personal Christian life by exhortations to humility and lowly love of the brethren, which is the condition of unity.² We all need, if we are to be kept in humility and sanity, to “put ourselves to school,” as someone has finely said, “within a larger religious experience than our own,” and to be willing to test whatever personal illumination has come to us by comparing it with what has been revealed to others richer in Christian experience than ourselves. The Church is the depositary of the experience of the saints in all ages; and by cutting ourselves off from its fellowship we rob ourselves of much of our spiritual heritage.

The first of the “fruits of the Spirit” is love; and love, as the late Dean Rashdall wrote, “can be perfectly realized only in a society.”³ The Christian life is not simply a right relation of the individual soul to God as Father; the first commandment requires that the second should be added to it. The true manhood of the individual develops as he loses himself in service to the “beloved community,” and as its members work together in tasks

¹ *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of To-day*, p. 119.

² Eph. iii. 14–iv. 3, Phil. ii. 1–4, Col. iii. 11–14, etc.

³ Pamphlet “What is the Church?” (*Papers in Modern Churchmanship*), p. 16. The author goes on: “Only in a society in which love exists in its perfection can the idea of the true Church be perfectly realized. The sooner any actual Church comes to that ideal, the more it is a Church, a branch of the true Church; though no society can ever become *the* Church until it includes the whole body of those who love one another in Christ.”

for the good of other men. The body can only prosper, and its members can only truly live, as they are animated by the spirit of him who "for their sakes consecrated himself," and who was "obedient right up to death." Of this principle the Last Supper is the crowning exhibition. While we may well doubt whether our Lord intended by it to introduce a ceremony for observance by his followers, we may be certain that he desired thereby to bind them to himself in the spirit of the Cross, the spirit of self-sacrificing love.¹ The corporate worship of the Church, however organized, has the development of this spirit as one of its prime objects.

The Christian life, then, like all other life, tends to produce an organized body in which it can freely function. If human beings are to act together, and not merely as units, there must be some organization, however simple, for coming together, taking decisions, and planning work. The beginnings of such organization in the Christian Fellowship we have already traced, and parallels can be readily found in later Christian movements such as those of the Quakers and the early Methodists. In the case of the Quakers, the organization was only effected by George Fox and his companions at the cost of facing and overcoming serious opposition within the body, from extreme individualists who feared any organization whatever, as inconsistent with the free personal guidance of the Spirit.² The aim of Fox was to preserve this freedom, together with the local autonomy of groups of congregations known as "Monthly Meetings," while reserving the general control of the movement for the body at large, represented by the "Yearly Meeting."

The objectors to rules and regulations had on their side

¹ J. Oman, art. "Church" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. III, p. 620. Also J. R. Coates, *The Christ of Revolution*, pp. 58 ff.

² W. C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, chapters viii.-xii.

an undoubted fact—that any organization tends, owing to the conservatism and inertia of human nature, to become stereotyped and to be thought of not as a means to larger life, but as an end in itself. It is usually in revolt against such conservatism that any new religious movement begins—whether Christianity itself, other new religions like Buddhism or Islam, or movements within such communities. Some saint or leader, on fire with old truth which he has newly discovered for himself, finds his ardour damped and his freedom checked by the cold rigidity of the institution, and feels himself bound to reform it, if that be possible, or if not to break away from it. In the latter case he begins to set up a new organization among his followers, in which for a time they find freedom for the new life to grow; but gradually, as the inward fire cools, the old automatism begins to reassert itself, and the process is repeated. As Evelyn Underhill puts it :

The institution, since it represents the element of stability in life, does not give, and must not be expected to give, direct spiritual experience; or any onward push towards novelty, freshness of discovery and interpretation in the spiritual sphere. Its dangers and limitations will abide in a certain dislike of such freshness of discovery; the tendency to exalt the corporate and stable, and discount the mobile and individual. Its natural instinct will be for exclusivism, the club-idea, conservatism and cosiness; it will, if left to itself, revel in the middle-aged atmosphere and exhibit the middle-aged point of view.¹

Hence it is desirable that in a Christian society the burden of organization shall be as light as possible. Room must be made in it for personal initiative under the fresh “anointing” of the Spirit. The individual should be left free to follow Christ directly, with the minimum of human control. Christ must be given liberty to inspire and

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 125 ff. There is a vigorous exposition of the conflict between the “inspired” and the official mind in Baron von Hügel’s *Essays and Addresses* (Second Series), pp. 6-11.

animate the members of his body, as the sap of the vine is free to circulate through all its branches—to direct his followers, individually and collectively, to the particular tasks he would have them undertake, as Barnabas and Saul were “separated” for the work to which they were called.¹ Any human arrangements that check or thwart the freedom of the Spirit, or narrow the channel through which the Divine life can reach the souls of Christ’s disciples, are not of his devising. The Church, if it is to be his Church, must beware of stifling its life by over-organization.

(2) A second necessity for a Church may be deduced from the very fact that it is not simply an end in itself. It exists not for its own sake only, but for the sake of the world that Christ came to save. Like the individuals who compose the Church, it also must save its life by losing it. Jesus felt that he had been sent into the world by the Father to set up the Kingdom of God among men. In the brief years of his earthly ministry he could only begin the task, and he left the body of his disciples as the organ through which his living Spirit should carry it to completion. Hence the Church exists for the Kingdom of God, and we cannot, without great loss, follow Augustine in identifying the two conceptions. The Church is, indeed, the society of those into whose hearts the Reign of Christ has already come, and in whose lives it is set up; but it is not set up yet in the world as a whole. “We see not yet all things subjected to him.”²

The Church (writes a great scholar) “rests on the conviction that the true Divine order is ever ready to break into the world, if men will only suffer it to break into their hearts. It is the society of those who already realize the blessings of the Kingdom of God in their hearts—pardon, grace, joy—and are so sure that it will come in fullness that they can live as if it actually were

¹ Acts xiii. 2.

² Heb. ii. 8.

come, and so can disregard the whole question of visible power, organize themselves wholly on the basis of love, and leave all issues with God.¹

If, then, the Church is the organ through which in the Divine order the world is to be brought under the Reign of Christ, this would seem to be the natural place at which to introduce a brief study of its Missionary activity—the outcome of a vital element in Christianity itself.

The Missionary Calling of the Church.

The primitive Church at Jerusalem seems to have had no clear conception that a message had been given it for the pagan world. The minds of the first followers of Jesus were so preoccupied with the expectation of his early return in glory that they imagined the responsibility for the establishment of his Kingdom rested with him and not with them. Only gradually, and through the pressure of circumstances, did the truth dawn on them that their agency was needed. The first preaching of which we hear to those outside the Jewish community was undertaken, not by Apostles, but by the rank and file of the Church in Judea when it was scattered after the stoning of Stephen.² It was evidently not conducted according to any pre-concerted plan, but was simply due to the natural exuberance of ordinary men and women to whom a new and

¹ J. Oman, *op. cit.*, p. 619. Compare Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* p. 19: "We may speak of the Ecclesia as the visible representative of the Kingdom of God, or as the primary instrument of its sway, or under analogous forms of language. But we are not justified in identifying the one with the other, so as to be able to apply directly to the Ecclesia whatever is said in the Gospels about the Kingdom of God."

² Acts viii. 1, 4, xi. 19, 20. Harnack points out that the fact of the Apostles being left alone by the Jewish authorities at this time indicates that they were stricter Jews than many of their fellow-believers (*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 57). The idea which later came to be held in the Church, that the Apostles agreed to spread themselves as missionaries throughout the world, is of course quite unhistorical.

wonderful thing had happened, and who could not keep it to themselves. The people of Samaria, the Ethiopian official, the Roman centurion Cornelius, and many at Antioch, accepted the message; and to all appearance the Jerusalem church was totally unprepared for the wider responsibilities that were thus opened out before it. But, relying on the Spirit, it yielded to the facts, and was willing to be led where the Spirit guided. Yet, unless there had been added to it the wide vision and intense devotion of the Hellenist Paul, it may be that the early Church would have been content to remain a sect within the fold of Judaism.

However this may be, before the end of the first century its field of vision widened, and we find it attributing to its Lord the commission to "make disciples of all the nations."¹ From that time at any rate the Church of Christ knew that it was called to a vast enterprise—to win the world for him. The Spirit had led the Church to recognize aspects of its Master's teaching (as for example about the mustard seed and the leaven in the dough) which at first it had overlooked, and to draw true inferences from them as to its place and work in the world. By the middle of the second century Justin Martyr could claim that Christianity had spread not only over the Græco-Roman world, but beyond its borders; Tertullian and Origen, a little later, speak of it as touching the most distant and barbarous nations.² How far this rapid expansion of the religion of Jesus was the work of the organized Church as a body, and how far it was due to the Spirit-led activities

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19. So, in the great prayer attributed to Jesus in the fourth Gospel, the Church is conceived as sent by him for the salvation of the world (John xvii. 18, 20, 21). Hort remarks on the contrast between the exclusive spirit of the Palestinian Jews (1 Thess. ii. 14-16) and that of Paul, for whom missionary activity was a vital element in the conception of a Church (*op. cit.*, p. 220).

² C. R. Beazley, art. "Missions" in *E.R.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 705.

of individual believers, it is hard to say.¹ But it is certain that leading bishops and dignitaries of the Church felt and obeyed the call to go to some of the furthest regions of the then known world with the message of the Gospel. We are told by Eusebius the Church historian that Pantænus, head of the theological school at Alexandria, visited "India" (which means, possibly, some part of Arabia) before the end of the second century; Origen received and accepted an invitation to teach in Arabia. Gregory the Illuminator led a mission to Armenia about A.D. 302, and "Armenia was the first country in which Christianity was adopted as the national religion."² By the time that the Roman Empire became Christian, in name at least, soon after the beginning of the fourth century, the religion of Jesus had virtually won the world.

In spite of the decadence that followed, the Church never entirely lost sight of its world-wide mission. In the fifth century Ireland was converted by the preaching of St. Patrick, and the Irish Church took up mission work of its own, spreading the Gospel in Scotland and northern England. In A.D. 597 Pope Gregory despatched his mission to southern England, which resulted in the conversion of our forefathers to Christianity; and English missionaries in their turn spread the faith in northern Europe. During

¹ Harnack's great work on the Expansion of Christianity throws little light on this point. But he shows that the early missionaries were expected to have no means of their own, and to go from place to place without settling down. They must therefore have been supported by the Church when those to whom they ministered failed to supply their needs. He believes that some of the most effectual mission work was done by martyrs and by simple Christians who did not preach, but who proved by their lives that their religion was worth having. Further, he expresses the judgment that the very organization of the Church, combining as it did local autonomy with collective authority, was itself a powerful means of spreading the faith. "The mere existence and persistent activity of the Christian communities did more than anything else to bring about the extension of the Christian religion." (Vol. I, pp. 435 ff., 453-461; Vol. II, pp. 49, 50.)

² *E.R.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 705.

those centuries also the Nestorians, who to the lasting shame of the orthodox Church had been cut off from its fellowship, showed marvellous missionary activity, establishing successful churches in many parts of Asia, including China. As late as the thirteenth century there are said to have been as many as twenty-five metropolitan sees in the Nestorian church, and Nestorian Christians are found in southern India even to the present day.

The story of the early spread of Christianity is a romantic one, and there was much heroism and devotion in the efforts of both the Western and the Eastern branches of the Church to extend the knowledge of Christ, such as they had, to the distant regions of the earth. The darkest blot on its pages is the method adopted, especially during and after the long and disastrous conflicts with the fighting religion of Islam, of propagating "the faith" by the sword—than which nothing shows more sadly how little Christ and his religion were understood. What concerns us here is the fact that, however corrupt the Church became, the sense that Christianity is by its very nature a missionary religion—given in the first instance to the few that through them it may spread to humanity at large—was never really lost, at least until the time of the Reformation. We of the Reformed churches do not always acknowledge as we should the devotion to mission work of the Roman Catholic church, especially that of its various monastic orders, both before and since the sixteenth century. It is a strange fact that, with the exception of some efforts made in the seventeenth century for the conversion of the North American Indians, and in the eighteenth by the Moravians, none of the Protestant churches showed, for some two hundred years, any real concern for spreading their religion over the earth. Not till after the churches had been awakened by the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century did the call to mission service take hold of the Protestant mind. The

East India Company rigorously excluded Christian missionaries from its territories till its charter was revised in 1813. Only with the nineteenth century were Protestant missions taken up in earnest, and their expansion is a matter only of the last one hundred years. So is that of the British and Foreign Bible Society (founded 1804), which aids their work by supplying copies of the Scriptures in many languages, now numbering upwards of 500, and circulates them to the extent of more than ten millions annually.

Most of the great Missionary Societies are more or less denominational in character, and cannot in consequence altogether avoid the propagation of special types of Christianity. In most cases, with the exception (I believe) of the Presbyterian and Methodist missions, they are not part and parcel of the church organizations, though keeping in close touch with them. Yet, since the effective prosecution of such work obviously requires careful organization, we shall not be wrong in citing missionary experience as evidence of the need for an organized Church.

During the past century the conception of the aim and method of foreign mission work has greatly altered, in company with the changes in religious thought which have swept over all the progressive churches through the new knowledge, gained by science, of the history of the world, the application of scientific methods to the study of the Biblical documents, and the comparative study of religious ideas and institutions. The nature of Divine revelation is better understood than formerly. Many of the foremost missionaries, through their contact with life itself as well as through their reading, are in advance of some at home who help to support them—and this to an extent imperfectly understood by most of their critics. It is now widely recognized that Christianity is quite other than a system of beliefs which can be guaranteed as true, while those of

"heathenism" are nothing but error. It is felt to be a response of the soul to the Father whom Christ reveals, and a life, individual and corporate, moulded by Christ's Spirit into accordance with the will of God. He has not "left Himself without witness" in the hearts of men, as Barnabas and Paul told the people of Lystra.¹ The best missionaries are discarding such terms as "heathen darkness," and striving earnestly to understand the thoughts of those to whom they minister, to build upon foundations already laid, to be receptive as well as critical, and to show that Christianity fulfils the yearnings of the human soul for God, to which all religions testify. Their aim is less to rescue a few individuals as "brands from the burning" than to help in building up in other lands a real Christian society. While the need for the preaching of the Gospel is fully recognized, it is seen that to be effective on any large scale it requires to be supplemented by Christian education, both general and in some cases industrial, and by efforts to heal the bodies as well as the souls of men. Moreover, it is widely felt that the true aim must be, not to impose on the natives of Asia or Africa an alien religion or civilization, but to foster the growth of an indigenous Christianity, which shall be as soon as possible self-supporting and self-propagating; the presence of foreign missionaries being maintained only so long as the native church needs help and support from those who have had more experience. From this point of view the movement for the Reunion of the divided sects of Protestant Christendom has received a powerful impetus from the mission fields, for it is recognized as absurd and disastrous to try to reproduce the divisions of Western Christianity among peoples for whom they have no meaning. United work by different missionary societies, particularly in education, has made considerable progress, especially in China.

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

Further, the objection often made by opponents of foreign missions, that until Christianity is so practised as to give us a really Christian society at home it is little use to try to carry it abroad, is acknowledged to have increasing weight. In the world of to-day communications are easy, and distant peoples more and more can see us as we are. Intelligent students from Japan, China and India come to Europe and America; and from what they see of the social, industrial and political conditions of countries that call themselves Christian it is little wonder that many of them are not favourably impressed by a religion which seems to them to bear such doubtful fruit. And finally the great war, which has shaken to their foundations the professedly Christian nations of Europe, may well seem to Eastern minds a clear proof that acceptance of Christianity does not issue in the peace and brotherhood of mankind. Hence the wiser missionaries, and many of their supporters at home, are recognizing that if the Christian Church (in its widest sense) is to fulfil its primary function of helping to set up the Kingdom of God among men, it must bestir itself to show that the religion of Jesus Christ is not a failure in the lands that have, in name at least, adopted it.¹

Missionary enterprise is thus seen to be work for the Kingdom of God which cannot fully succeed unless it is linked by close ties with other lines of endeavour to establish a Christian society of men in all the nations of the world, and to make the spirit and principles of Jesus Christ the basis of our own social, industrial and international life. An attempt to survey what Christianity has already effected in the world, as the religion of human brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God, and to illustrate how much is still

¹ Many of these thoughts, and others bearing on the true work of the Christian Church at home and abroad, are excellently set forth in *Whither Bound in Missions?* by Daniel J. Fleming (New York, 1925). The book provides a liberal education in modern missionary work.

lacking, will be made in succeeding chapters. Meanwhile there is one question that needs to be briefly considered.

Is the pure religion of Jesus too lofty and spiritual to meet the needs of the great mass of mankind, as yet raw and undeveloped in spiritual understanding, and should we do better to leave them to religions more adapted to their condition? Or, if it is to be brought to them, must it be adulterated with inferior and more sensuous elements to make it assimilable? Is, for instance, the religion of Islam, its moral inferiority to Christianity being admitted, better adapted to the spiritual requirements of the natives of Africa? If it should be allowed that Jesus never intended to establish rites for observance in his Church, may it not yet be that such symbols are necessary for minds that cannot, without their aid, appreciate the reality for which they stand?

The question is weighty, and I do not wish to under-rate its force. It seems clear that some spiritual preparation is needed for the reception of the highest truth. We may well doubt whether Jesus himself could have made much, if any, impression on the debaters of Athens with their lack of moral interest, or the populace of Rome, debauched by free food and gladiatorial shows. Even in the seed-bed which had been prepared in the hearts of Galilean Jews, the seed of his teaching, if we may venture to say so, only just took root. His Gospel could hardly have spread as it did in the Græco-Roman world, had it not been for the moral and religious influence already exerted among "devout Greeks" by the Jewish synagogues that in the first century were scattered throughout its cities. This is no doubt why the early progress of Christian missions in countries hitherto untouched has usually been so slow. But, if we look at the question in the light of the actual practice of Jesus and his Apostles, we have no evidence that they ever watered down the Gospel, or adulterated its pure metal with baser alloy,

to suit the minds of the spiritually undeveloped, as the Catholic Church undoubtedly did when it compromised with polytheism by inculcating the worship of the Virgin and the Saints. In the fourth Gospel Jesus is reported to have given his loftiest teaching, concerning God and the worship He requires, to an alien and degraded woman by the well at Sychar. Many of Paul's profoundest thoughts about Christ and the revelation he brought to men were written to converts at Corinth and elsewhere, many of whom were ill-educated and who had only just emerged from paganism. And experience of what Christianity has done to change the lives of men, during the last fifty years—not only among relatively advanced peoples like the Chinese and the Koreans, but among more backward races like those of South Africa, Madagascar, and Fiji—gives us good ground for believing that there is a light in the souls of all men, even those who are apparently low in the scale, which can and does convince them of the truth and beauty of the character of Jesus, of the love of the Father he came to reveal, and of the power of his grace in the human soul.¹

A lower religion faithfully lived out by those who profess it is a more powerful influence in the lives of men than a higher one whose precepts are obviously not taken seriously. It is by life more than by word that the seed of the Gospel must be carried if it is to take root and grow. But, if the messengers of Jesus go in his spirit and power, if their

¹ It may be objected to what is said above that both Paul and "John" endeavoured to combat Gnostic tendencies in the Church by a certain use of Gnostic ideas and terminology (e.g. Col. i. 19, John i. 16, etc. See above, pp. 120 and 122). Harnack makes the rather startling suggestion that, in these and other cases, "sound" doctrine was deliberately inoculated with a strong dilution of "heresy," to make it proof against virulent infection! (*Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 113 n.) But were these teachers really doing more than any intelligent missionary would now do—viz. seek out what is good in the religion of those he wishes to win, and try to build on that?

characters and conduct are clearly moulded by obedience to him, if they can show his grace and humility in their dealings with one another and with persons of another race, we need not suppose that the establishment of his Kingdom on earth requires the Church to lower his ideals in order to win easy but transient victories.

(3) A third necessary function of a Church may be seen to arise out of what was said above concerning the need to associate the propagation of Christianity in the world with positive evidence that it has power to arrest the conflicts that arise out of corporate selfishness among men, and to substitute for them harmony and peace. If the principles and way of life taught and lived by Jesus Christ are ever to become the principles that animate men in their larger relations—if they are to influence the behaviour to one another of national groups and of classes (such as those of employers and employed) within each nation—it seems essential that they should not only be believed in by individuals, but that the duty and blessedness of applying them in practice should be collectively declared and taught. Above the strident voices that from press and platform call men to pursue their sectional interests, there is a paramount need for the quiet summons of a voice from above the conflict, saying in the name of Jesus, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” There should be a body that can so speak to men, with authority based on historic experience and collective conviction. To a certain extent the mediæval Catholic Church understood and discharged this function; it curbed the aggression of princes, tried to put down private war and oppression, and stood for justice in business dealings. The inevitable breakdown of its supreme authority has left the world at the mercy of national “sovereignties,” and self-interest has been widely held to be rightfully the moving force of trade and commerce.

National churches have sprung up, whose duty has been thought of by some as the maintenance of national interests, and of the existing order of society, however stained with injustice. At national celebrations, like the crowning of a king, it is the Church and the Army that are mainly in evidence, as though their functions were similar.

There will be something to say at a later stage about the relations of Christianity to War—war between nations, between races, and between classes. Here I only wish to suggest that the Christian Church, of whatever branch, ought to be always at a supra-national level, and to call upon men to recognize their unity and brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God. On the threatened outbreak of any conflict, it should be the Church's duty not to inflame passion but to allay it, by pointing out to men their mutual duties and responsibilities, and assuring them that only through justice and right dealing and the practice of goodwill can lasting peace be secured. And at all times it should teach, with the conviction that springs from knowledge, that these are the conditions of national security and of internal peace. During the great war of 1914-1918 the most conspicuous feature of the religious world was the almost complete abdication of such a function by the churches of the warring countries, whether established or free. Only the great Roman Catholic church to a certain extent rose above the conflict; but it was so closely tied to Austria that its efforts had little influence in either Italy or France. Some good fruit, however, was borne by the endeavour of the little Society of Friends to help the victims of war, regardless of nationality, whether interned in this country, or homeless through the devastation of France, or starving in Germany as the result of the blockade.¹

Dr. W. E. Hocking wrote, some years ago, that the function of organized religion is to assist the creative will

¹ See *A Quaker Adventure*, by A. Ruth Fry.

of the inspired or prophetic individual, by helping to create the kind of world in which he may have some hope of success.

Religion defies the clash and decay of the political attempts of men, whose mission in their own way is similar ; but it is historic religion which chiefly renders those political attempts hopeful. Religion, from primitive times the protector of the stranger, the market-place, the truce, is the forerunner of international law ; because it alone can create the international spirit, the international obligation ; it alone can permanently sustain and assure that spirit. . . . It brings to the individual soul not only its moral ideal, its psychological norm, but also the kind of world wherein such a mind can alone rightly assert itself. It is a unified and responsible world, one which cares for the individual in his concrete character—a human world which religion itself has made.¹

Real Christianity knows no barriers of race or nation, class or creed. Wherever man is, there is the Spirit of Christ—potentially ; and it is for his Church to make his presence an actuality.

Some time ago a very prominent Indian Christian was conversing with a Hindu friend about education, and the Hindu was expatiating upon the need for bringing to bear upon Indian education the resources latent in different parts of India and in the Indian tradition. "Yes," said the Christian, "but *we* can call on the whole world." Mohammedans have something of this world-consciousness, and perhaps, though the bounds of their brotherhood are limited, are more acutely conscious than Christians of the bonds that bind them to Moslems of other nations. The Christian Church, however, is in principle the greatest inter-racial religious fellowship in the world, and no sense of failure of the Church to realize its destiny should blind us to its inherent nature.²

And that which is true of races and nations is true also of classes and interests within the national community. Perhaps the intervention of Bishops and other represen-

¹ *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 521 ff.

² Rev. W. Paton, in *Goodwill*, July 1926, p. 206.

tatives of the Christian churches of England during the great Coal dispute of 1926, in the desire that it should be settled by reconciliation and not simply stifled by a "fight to a finish," may be found to have opened a new era in the relations of organized Christianity to the industrial problems of our day.

PART IV

CHRISTIANITY IN HUMAN LIFE

SUMMARY

Difficulties of estimating the net effect of Christianity on human life and happiness. While the Church has often been an obstacle to progress, the inner spirit of Christianity has survived as a reforming power, not only in the lives of individuals but in the institutions of society. This is mainly due to insight into the worth of all human personality. This principle, discerned and stated by some Roman Stoics, was made by Jesus a part of his revelation of God, and was left by him to grow as a seed in the minds of his followers. Through it the Church at last succeeded in abolishing the Gladiatorial Shows. Its application to the institution of Slavery was not clearly seen. The gradual disappearance of Slavery from the ancient world was mainly due to other forces than Christianity, but in modern times Christianity has been the chief power that has secured emancipation.

As regards the ideal of personal Liberty, while the official Church has often been oppressive, the spirit of Christianity has been active from the first in fostering the sense that responsibility to God takes precedence over human laws, and thus has aided the development of free and independent personality. The recognition of freedom of conscience is largely the achievement of non-conforming Christians. The advance of political liberty has been mainly due to perception of the inherent worth of manhood ; to which principle we must look for liberation within the economic sphere.

CHAPTER X

PERSONALITY AND LIBERTY

THE study of "Christianity as Life" demands an attempt to estimate what effect the Christian religion has had upon the actual lives of men both as individuals and as communities. The subject is a very large one, and is attended with serious difficulties. It requires a knowledge of history much greater than I possess, with a breadth of vision and a balance of judgment which it is easier to desire than to attain. A full treatment of it is beyond my powers. All I can do is to try to seize and elucidate a few of its larger features.

Two difficulties confront the student at the outset. In the first place, it is never easy to isolate a single factor from a complex historical development, and to judge correctly to what extent it is the true cause of what occurs. Mankind, for example, has made real progress in developing a conscience in regard to cruelty to animals : in the most advanced countries such cruelty is made a crime against the law. The horror that right-minded people now feel in regard to War is increased by the terrible suffering it has inflicted on animals that have no say in the matter. We should hardly be justified, as scientific students of history, in claiming that this increased tenderness is purely an effect of Christian teaching, without first considering what other factors may have contributed towards it, and examining the extent to which such a conscience has been developed among peoples who have been little influenced by our religion.

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas :

a sound knowledge of causation in history is the aim of every sincere student of human affairs ; but the more he learns the more difficult he often finds it to make dogmatic statements.

Secondly, there is the special difficulty, in this particular enquiry, of keeping clear before our minds what it is we mean by " Christianity." Are we to think of it as an institution, or as a system of intellectual beliefs concerning God and the spiritual world, or as an inner spirit and motive that affects men's ways of life, and especially their dealings with one another ? Our judgment as to the effect of Christianity on human life will differ if we use the word in different senses. Creeds and institutions often crystallize at a time when the spiritual life is low ; and when once set they are very hard to change. Men are often better than their creed. Their present sense of the kind of conduct religion demands of them is often in advance of the corporate and official pronouncements that have come down from an earlier time. At the same time we are bound to recognize that it is perhaps more often the other way : the creed is professed but is not " lived up to."

In accordance with the general purpose of this book, I shall endeavour to treat " Christianity " from the inner side—using the word to stand for the spirit and way of life, in relation to God and men, which marked its Founder and (so far as they understood him) was followed by his first disciples. Jesus, I take it, felt it to be his mission to introduce among men an experience of God, and a conception of the Divine requirements, widely different from that which was known among the people of his day, whether Jews or Greeks or Romans. The general experience among men of sonship with God, and the world-wide adoption of his way of life, was the consummation for which he lived and died, and which he called the Kingdom of God. The question before us is, To what extent has it been effective in moulding the life of the human race ?

How are we to find an answer? Those who are not expert historians must be content for the most part with impressions derived from the researches of others into contemporary records of bygone events and movements. We can read what these set before us of the judgments of observers of the life around them, allowing for probable bias on the one side or the other; and our conclusions will be weighty in proportion to the breadth of their basis and the impartiality with which we have endeavoured to form them.

I wish to recognize at the outset such facts as are often appealed to in evidence either that Christ's Gospel has not been effective, or that its main effects have been harmful rather than good. (1) The domination of the Christian Church, it is said, placed the mind of man in fetters, by banning as heresy any result of independent enquiry which did not square with its dogmas. Therefore the Church has been the chief obstacle to human progress in thought and knowledge of the world. (2) The Church by its attitude to heretics divided men from one another instead of uniting them, and has been a potent cause of hatred, bloodshed and cruelty. (3) Christianity for many centuries encouraged the ascetic spirit which led multitudes of the best men and women to neglect the duties of ordinary life, to cut themselves off from their fellows, and even to despise the claims of home and family. (4) Christianity by its doctrine of "otherworldliness" has taught men to be content with wrong and injustice in this world; it has often supported the existing order, however evil, and has therefore been an obstacle in the way of attaining happier social, political and economic relations.

That there is much truth in these and other criticisms we must all, I believe, sorrowfully admit. It will, however, be observed that the first two are directed against *ecclesiastical* Christianity, not the religion of Jesus and his

Apostles. That ecclesiasticism was not a necessary outcome of that religion I have already done my best to show. As regards the third and fourth charges, which appear to be directed against Christianity as a life and spirit and not only against its embodiment in the Church, there is much to be said on the other side, which will I hope find allusion in the sequel. And it must be borne in mind that deep below the outward forms that Christianity has assumed there has always been, latent and often crushed by human authority, but really present and active in the minds of men, the true spirit of the religion of Jesus, which has been like salt that has preserved it from destruction, or like the quiescent life which under the frozen winter soil renews the beauty of the springtime. This undying ferment of genuine Christianity has been the source of its power to reform from time to time the institutions to which it has given rise, even when these have apparently become hopelessly corrupt.

That Christianity, in the first two centuries of its existence, brought new life and hope to a world that was perishing through disillusionment and moral inertia, is too much a commonplace of history to need elaboration here. I will quote two passages from writers of the nineteenth century, neither of whom can be suspected of bias towards dogmatic Christianity. Joseph Mazzini, the prophet of the great struggle for Italian freedom and unity, wrote :

There were utilitarians about the time of the fall of the Roman Empire. Their formula was then *panem et circenses*—bread and amusements ; and under the reign of that formula, accepted by the people, Rome, devoured by the gangrene of egotism, rotted and perished. Jesus came. He endeavoured not to save the perishing world by analysis [that is, by philosophy]. He spoke not of their interest to men whom interest had degraded. He laid down, in the name of heaven, some unknown axioms ; and these

few axioms did change the face of the world. A single spark of *faith* effected what all the schools of the philosophers had not even a glimpse of—a step in the education of the human race.¹

Mr. W. E. H. Lecky, the historian of Rationalism, wrote :

It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love ; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions ; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration. Perfect love knows no rights. It creates a boundless uncalculating self-abnegation that transforms the character, and is the parent of every virtue. . . . The universe to them [the early Christians] was transformed by love. . . . Christianity offered a deeper consolation than any prospect of endless life, or of millennial glories. It taught the weary, the sorrowing and the lonely to look up to heaven and to say, "Thou, God, carest for me." ²

These historical judgments are borne out by much contemporary evidence. The Christian Apologists of the second century constantly appeal to the manifest change that Christianity has wrought in the lives of men and women as something so obvious that it admits of no refutation. Quite characteristic is this passage from one of the noblest

¹ "Thoughts on Democracy in Europe," in *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 141.

² *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, pp. 8-11. For the childlike happiness of the early Christians, and their liberation from the prevailing fear of demons, see Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, chap. v.

of these Apologies, by the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus (who was perhaps the tutor of the future Emperor Marcus Aurelius), about the middle of the second century :

Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. . . . They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners ; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. . . . They marry like all other men and they beget children ; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and they are persecuted by all. . . . They are reviled, and they bless ; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers ; being punished they rejoice as if they were thereby quickened by life. . . . In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world.¹

Even later, when persecution for the time was in abeyance, when the "first love" of many had cooled, and the moral standard of the Christian life was tending downwards, writers like Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen "appeal confidently to the moral results achieved by conversion. They speak as if a man who became a Christian normally underwent a complete turnover from sin to righteousness. In the main the facts must have corresponded to this proud claim, otherwise it would have simply broken in the Apologist's hand."²

So far as concerns the life of the individual, there can be no question, in the mind of anyone acquainted with the evidence, that Christianity wrought a wondrous change, not only in the moral standard that men and women set before them, but in their power to attain it and in the success

¹ *Epistle to Diognetus*, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 505 f.

² C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, p. 298.

of their achievement. What Stoicism gave to the few, that (and much more) Christianity brought to the many. A life like that of Jesus himself, based on the sense that God was near and knowable, that He loved and cared for all who gave themselves up to Him in a spirit of childlike trust and obedience; an exhilarating sense of liberation from the fear of evil spirits, and from despair and hopelessness; an intense conviction that there was now something worth living for and (if needful) dying for; a love like that of Jesus, not alone to fellow-members of the "body of Christ" but to men as men; such experiences as these shone in the faces of humble men and women to whom the best philosophies of Greece and Rome had little to offer. For the pursuit of "virtue," noble but cold and bloodless, there was substituted a consciousness of warm pulsating life, which lifted the recipient of the Gospel of Jesus clean above the defilements of pagan society into a region of experience where old temptations largely died away. Jesus had not only brought men to God—other prophets, in their measure, could do that—he had brought God to men.¹

But the life of the individual, though it naturally comes first for consideration, and is essential to a right understanding of what Christianity achieved, is not all. What of the forms and institutions in which the collective life of men expresses itself? How did Christianity affect the administration of Government, the practice of war and of slavery, the holding of property, the institution of marriage and the life of the family, the training of children, the status and estimation of women, and so forth? These are very large questions, to which only illustrative answers can be given—in this and the following chapters.

¹ Similar changes have recently been observed in countries like Korea, where Christianity has for the first time taken effective hold of large masses of people.

There is, I believe, a root principle which, if clearly understood, will guide us towards the answers we desire to find. Christianity slowly reformed many of these institutions, and is (we may hope) on the way to reform them all, because it brings home to us, in a way that neither philosophy nor any other religion has ever done, *the essential worth of all human personality*. In early Christian writings the truth of this principle is rather felt than formulated; even in the Gospels, still more in the Epistles of the New Testament, it rarely finds explicit statement. Some of the Roman Stoics and jurists, indeed, uninfluenced by Christianity, had begun to hold and express it more clearly than the Christians themselves. "Cicero," says Mr. Lecky, "maintained the doctrine of universal brotherhood [which is only another way of expressing the sense of the worth of all human beings] as distinctly as it was afterwards maintained by the Christian Church."¹ He quotes passages from the writings of the great orator in proof of this, and others from Lucan, Seneca and Epictetus. It was a new note in human literature.² To the Greek mind, even at its best, the full worth of humanity was only to be found in the Greek free man; "barbarians," slaves, and women were estimated on a lower scale of value.³ The Jew was even more exclusive; his own people were the chosen of God, the rest were only fitted to be recipients of His wrath.⁴ And even among the Romans the principle of the inherent

¹ Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 240 ff.

² "When we pass from Aristotle to Cicero we pass from the ancient world to the modern." (A. J. Carlyle, *The Christian Church and Liberty*, p. 36.)

³ T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, pp. 217 ff., 287 ff.

⁴ The feeling of pious Jews of the first century towards the Gentiles is thus expressed in 2 Esdras vi. 55 f. (in the Apocrypha; the date is perhaps A.D. 100): "All this have I spoken before thee, O Lord, because thou hast said that for our sakes thou madest this world. As for the other nations, which also come of Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and are like unto spittle; and thou hast likened the abundance of them unto a drop that falleth from a vessel."

worth of man as man seems to have carried little or no conviction ; it remained like a dream of poets and philosophers rather than an active principle of common life.

Whether or not the reporters of Jesus understood it and realized its implications, it is clear that the principle we are considering underlay the teaching and practice of the Master. Occasionally he states it explicitly : " How much then is a man of more value than a sheep." ¹ " It is my will to give unto this last even as unto thee." ² The alien and the heretic, he implies, is yet " my neighbour." ³ More often it shines out silently from his treatment of those whom men despised : his friendship with " publicans " and sinners, his self-invitation to a meal with the hated Zacchæus, his attitude to women, his desire to have the children in his arms. He traced it to the mind of his Father, who makes His sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good.

From the first it seems to have been his method, not to lay down dogmatic definitions of right conduct, but to sow in the minds of his followers the seeds of right principles of action, and to leave them to germinate and grow. There can, I think, be no question whether the issue justified his faith that they *would* grow. Some sense at least of the inherent worth of all manhood came gradually to mould the lives of Christians, not only as individuals but as conscious members of the human family. It was, no doubt, difficult, especially for those who had been trained in the exclusiveness of Judaism. Peter required the vision on the house-top at Joppa to convince him that he ought not to call any man " common or unclean " ; ⁴ and even this did not secure that at Antioch he should show the courage of his convictions.⁵ Many of the bitterest opponents of Paul's universalism were undoubtedly Jewish Christians. But the very fact that the Church at large was won to the conviction

¹ Matt. xii. 12.

⁴ Acts x. 28.

² *Ibid.*, xx. 14.

⁵ Gal. ii. 11-14.

³ Luke x. 29-37.

that its Gospel was for the whole world is evidence that the walls of exclusiveness within which many of the disciples began their Christian experience were soon broken down. The missionary fervour of the early centuries shows that Christians were no longer content that at the coming of the Messiah in glory the greater part of the human race should be destroyed ; they understood something of what the fourth Evangelist meant when he attributed to Jesus the sayings, " I came not to judge the world but to save the world," and " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself." ¹ They began to see that there was in all men something abundantly worth saving.

It seems certain that Paul, at any rate at times, clearly discerned the inherent worth of all manhood and womanhood. He writes to the Galatians, " There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be neither male nor female ; for ye are all one [man] in Christ Jesus." ² If this verse stood alone, we might assume that he was thinking of the unity in Christ of believers only ; but we must compare it with another passage addressed to the Colossians, where he says that in the " new man, which is being renewed into knowledge after the image of him that created him, there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman ; but Christ is all, and in all." ³ This can only mean, as I read it, that he thought the " new man " would recognize the image of Christ to be at least potentially present in the Scythian, regarded as the lowest of barbarians. He obviously regards this as *new* " knowledge "—as part of the revelation brought into the world by Jesus Christ.⁴ As such—so far as it was

¹ John xii. 47, 32.

² Gal. iii. 28.

³ Col. iii. 10, 11.

⁴ This is confirmed by Eph. iii. 3-6, where Paul (or someone else writing in his spirit) speaks of the "mystery" lately revealed, that "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body."

understood—the early Church received it. The principle of the inherent worth of all manhood and womanhood is hard to prove by any process of reasoning. It had been held by a few philosophers, perhaps as an outcome of reflection on the unification of the world under the Empire ; but it was an easy subject for sceptical ridicule from persons who supposed they knew what men and women were. Now, to Christian believers, it became an integral part of the truth of God on which the New Age was based—the truth revealed by Jesus Christ. The incarnation taught men not alone to see God in Jesus Christ, but to see Christ in all men : “ Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.”¹ The gold which had been hoarded in the treasure-chests of the philosophers was now scattered broadcast as current coin among men—among men most of whom made no pretence that they understood philosophy, but who were willing to receive the message of Jesus Christ. Speaking of Christian “ charity ” in its many forms, Mr. Lecky says : “ This minute and scrupulous care for human life and human virtue in the humblest forms, in the gladiator, the savage, or the infant, was wholly foreign to the genius of paganism. It was produced by the Christian doctrine of the inestimable value of each immortal soul. It is the distinguishing and transcendent characteristic of every society into which the spirit of Christianity has passed.”²

How this newly-recognized principle of the equal worth of all manhood “ in the sight of God ” affected the attitude of Christians towards Slavery will be considered shortly. Meanwhile let us trace it at work in their feelings towards a feature of the Roman world which was most deeply characteristic of its life and aroused the fiercest passions

¹ Matt. xxv. 40.

² Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 34.

—the public Games in the amphitheatres at Rome and other cities. Mr. Lecky says :

The gladiatorial games form the one feature of Roman society which to a modern mind is almost inconceivable in its atrocity. That not only men, but women, in an advanced period of civilization—men and women who not only professed but very frequently acted upon a high code of morals—should have made the carnage of men their habitual amusement, that all this should have continued for centuries, with scarcely a protest, is one of the most startling facts in moral history.¹

Beginning as a religious ceremony to appease the Manes of the dead, these combats in the arena became the chief and absorbing pastime of the Roman populace, whose demand for exciting spectacles of courage and bloodshed grew ever more insistent, till in early Christian days the number of human lives sacrificed to the lust for blood was simply appalling—not only in Rome but in provincial cities also. No governor could maintain his hold on the people without giving these shows, and each sought to outdo his rivals by the scale on which they were provided. Eight hundred pairs of gladiators fought at the triumph of Aurelian; ten thousand during the games of Trajan :² “ Nero himself, on account of his munificence in this respect, was probably the sovereign who was most beloved by the Roman multitude.” No contemporary historian and few moralists except Seneca and Plutarch took this as other than a matter of course. Many, including Cicero, defended the shows as affording a valuable discipline in facing suffering and death.

It is well for us to look steadily on such facts as these. They display more vividly than any mere philosophical disquisition the abyss of depravity into which it is possible for human nature to sink. They furnish us with striking proofs of the reality of the

¹ Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 271 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 281, where the authorities are referred to.

moral progress we have attained, and they enable us to estimate the regenerating influence that Christianity has exercised in the world. For the destruction of the gladiatorial games is all its work.¹

From the first, Christian preachers and teachers denounced the games as immoral. No gladiator, or trainer of gladiators, was to be admitted to communion,² and Christians were urgently exhorted to abstain from witnessing the spectacles. At first, apparently, they took such abstinence for granted. Athenagoras, an Athenian apologist of about A.D. 180, says that Christians cannot endure to see a man put to death, since doing so is practically equivalent to killing him.³ When a growing laxity of conduct threatened to break down these scruples, Tertullian and others urged their fellow-Christians to keep away.⁴ Still later, Arnobius and Lactantius insisted that the games were pure savagery which no Christian could countenance.⁵ The accession of the "Christian" Emperor Constantine in A.D. 313 did not immediately put an end to them; but in 404 their final abolition was accomplished as the result of the heroism of the monk Telemachus, who rushed into the arena to part two combatants and was stoned to death by the spectators. The power of Christianity to do away with this diabolical amusement was clearly due to some perception, on the part of its professors, of the inherent worth of all manhood. Even if the gladiator were a slave, a military captive, or a criminal, still he was a human soul "for whom Christ died," and it was felt to be monstrously wrong that he should be butchered for the amusement of others.

When we pass on to consider the application of this principle to the institution of Slavery, there is less cause

¹ Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 282.

² C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, p. 442—quoting the "Egyptian Church Order" (date uncertain).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 593 ff.

to congratulate ourselves on the moral triumphs won by Christianity. In this field few of the leaders of the Church seem to have used their powers of moral reason for the fearless criticism of customary ways of living. In the absence of explicit directions from some outside source regarded as speaking with authority, most people take for granted the institutions to which they are accustomed, without enquiring how far these are in accordance with truth and righteousness. Remembering the Hebrew prophets of old, we might have expected that Christian teachers would have shown more ethical insight and intellectual courage than in fact they did.

It requires some exercise of the historical imagination to recognize how entirely the social life of the ancient world, both Greek and Roman, was built up on the basis of Slavery. Nearly all the manual work, in town and country (in Italy at least), was, under the Empire, performed by slaves, and also much of the intellectual labour required for the management of business. The demoralization caused by this, not only among the slaves,¹ but in the free population also, was extreme. "The poor citizen found almost all the spheres in which an honourable livelihood might be obtained wholly, or at least in a very great degree, preoccupied by slaves, while he had learnt to regard trade with invincible repugnance. Hence followed the immense increase of corrupt and corrupting professions, as actors, pantomimes, hired gladiators, political spies" and worse.²

Among the Jews, while Slavery was to some extent practised, "the treatment of the slave was never debasing or cruel";³ and this may in part explain the absence from

¹ The slaves had no rights against the master, and no provision was made for their legal marriage.

² Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 262 ff.

³ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "Slavery, Jewish," Vol. XI, p. 619.

the New Testament of any explicit denunciation of the system. In Palestine the evil does not seem to have been acute. Jesus, so far as his words are recorded, makes no allusion to it, except quite colourlessly, by way of illustration, in some of his parables. Paul shows no sign that he perceived the institution to be wrong in itself: he sends back the fugitive slave to his master Philemon—with what may be a hint that the latter would do well to set him free;¹ and he encourages slaves at Corinth to remain content with their condition, only welcoming any opportunity that might arise of gaining their liberty.² Perhaps the expectation of the early return of Christ for the winding up of human history may account in part for the absence in the primitive Church of any strong feeling concerning the need for the reform of existing institutions. However this may be, there is no doubt that the Christian conscience was very long indeed in waking to the perception that Slavery was inherently wrong. Expressions used by Seneca, the tutor of Nero, show a stronger apprehension of the worth of all humanity, even in the slave, than are to be found in the Christian writings of the early centuries.³ It is not that the principle was denied; it seems to have been felt and acknowledged; but its bearing on the institution of Slavery was not discerned, as it was in that of the gladiatorial shows. “The principle of the New Testament and of the philosophers,” says Dr. A. J. Carlyle, “was accepted and emphatically asserted by every important Christian writer for many centuries.”⁴ He gives a number of examples, culminating with the saying of Gregory the Great, that “we

¹ Philemon, 21.

² 1 Cor. vii. 20–24.

³ For some of these see *E.R.E.*, art. “Slavery, Roman,” Vol. XI, p. 626, and A. J. Carlyle, *The Christian Church and Liberty*, pp. 36 ff.

⁴ Carlyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 41 ff. This judgment (that while the principle was acknowledged its application was not perceived) is borne out, with ample illustration, by Cadoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–135, 452–455. Almost the only definite protest mentioned by him against Slavery as an institution is from the Gnostic *Acts of Thomas* (third century).

are all by nature equal." And yet he states with no less positiveness that it is a mistake to assert, as has often been done, that ancient slavery was destroyed by Christianity. "It is simply not true that the Christian Church of the first centuries had any direct or important share in its disappearance. It is unhappily true that in a certain measure some of the Christian writers rather tended to strengthen the institution." Not for some two hundred years after the Empire, under Constantine, became nominally Christian, was there any substantial alteration of the legal standing of Slavery. What the Church did was to mitigate the arbitrary and unjust treatment of slaves by their masters—one of the most revolting features of pagan society; to encourage manumission, and later to set up legal marriage and improve the position of the slave in the eyes of the law; and above all to foster from the start the feeling that Christian slaves and their masters were on the same level in the sight of God. Christianity, says Mr. Lecky, "supplied a new order of relations, in which the distinction of classes was unknown." The master and his slave "received the sacred elements together, they sat side by side at the Agapé, they mingled in the public prayers."¹ In church at any rate the slave was ideally, as Paul wrote to Philemon, "no longer a slave but a brother beloved." With God, wrote Lactantius (early fourth century), "no one is a slave, no one a master; for, if we all have the same Father, we are all free by an equal right."²

Slavery lingered long, but by the fourteenth century, in Western Europe, it was almost extinct or was merged in serfdom. Economic and political factors were at work in causing its disappearance, and it would be wrong to attribute this to Christianity alone; but we can at least say that the principle of the ideal worth of all men, which

¹ Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 66.

² Quoted by Cadoux, *op. cit.*, p. 610.

lay near the heart of the revelation brought by Christ, had some influence in hastening the liberation of the slave.

But, with the discovery of new lands across the Atlantic, where untold wealth could be exploited by forced labour, the practice of enslaving men had a new beginning, and soon found vigorous defenders. Slave-holding became general among the colonists, and the inhuman practice was adopted of importing negroes, as if they had been cattle, from Africa. This diabolical trade went on for nearly three centuries, and for the most part Christians either defended it or let it alone; some even took part in it without recognizing its iniquity. About 1520 Pope Leo X issued a bull against it, declaring that "not only the Christian religion but nature herself cried out against a system of slavery";¹ but his injunction had little effect. Apart from this, the first public protest against it in the name of Christ appears to have been raised by the Quakers. In 1675 William Edmundson, who had been companion to George Fox during a visit to Barbadoes, and afterwards travelled in Virginia and Maryland, publicly declared the practice of Slavery to be unchristian, and was promptly charged with inciting the negroes to rebellion.² In 1688 the German Quakers of Germantown, near Philadelphia, memorialized their Yearly Meeting against "the buying and keeping of negroes,"³ and repeated this protest in 1696. But the Yearly Meeting was largely composed of merchants and planters many of whom had grown rich and themselves held slaves; and by 1714 the most that the agitators obtained was a recommendation that "Friends generally do as much as may be to avoid buying such negroes as shall hereafter be brought in, rather than offend any Friends

¹ *E.R.E.*, Vol. XI, p. 608.

² J. G. Whittier, Introduction to *John Woolman's Journal*, p. 7.

³ Sharpless, *A Quaker Experiment in Government*, pp. 31 f.

who are against it ; yet this is only caution, not censure." Could anything better illustrate the slowness of the Christian conscience to awake to the meaning and requirements of the religion it professes ?

Readers of the *Journal* of John Woolman, which is a Quaker classic, may easily, through the modesty of the writer, miss the fact that it was mainly his insight and devotion which at last aroused the Quaker conscience in America to the moral iniquity of the slave system. This was achieved very largely through personal suasion by John Woolman himself, who with the utmost humility and tenderness went about the colonies to convince the slave-holding Quakers that they were doing wrong. He died in England in 1772 without seeing the full fruit of his truly prophetic labour ; in 1758 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had decided that Friends who held slaves " ought to set them at liberty, making a Christian provision for them " ; but not till 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, did any official Quaker body clear its people of acquiescence by giving orders that any Friends who persisted in holding slaves must be disowned.

Thus the Society of Friends, thanks largely to Woolman's inspired insight and faithfulness, has the honour of having been the first of the Christian communities to clear itself of the shame of upholding slavery. In Great Britain it is well known that Quakers were among the most ardent supporters of Clarkson and Wilberforce and Fowell Buxton, in the long agitations which at last in 1807 secured the abolition of the Slave Trade, and in 1833 the further Act abolishing Slavery in British Colonies. The award of £20,000,000 as compensation to the slave-holders, intended by the House of Commons as a loan, but changed by the Lords into a gift, shows perhaps the high-water mark yet attained in the application of Christian principle to national legislation.

For there can be no question that this time at any rate the chief moving force that for the second time has rendered Slavery well-nigh obsolete in the world has been the Christian religion. The agitation against the Slave Trade was a direct outcome of the Evangelical Revival of the later half of the eighteenth century ; and the chief supporters of the British Anti-Slavery Society, which has stood and still stands for the suppression of Slavery throughout the world, have always been Christian believers. The earnest efforts that are at present being made to prevent the exploitation of the natural resources of the earth, especially on the Continent of Africa, by methods of forced and indentured labour akin to Slavery, are for the most part directly inspired by Christianity—in the sense that those who work for this end are either Christian men and women, avowedly basing their action on the religion they profess, or that they are animated by the Christian principle of the inalienable worth of all manhood, though perhaps unconscious that it was Jesus Christ who first made it a working force in the affairs of men.

We turn now to consider, with the utmost brevity, the effect of Christian teaching on the ideal of Personal Liberty—religious, moral and intellectual—in other fields than that of Slavery. That such liberty is a main condition of human progress needs no proof. What has been the net effect upon it of the presence of Christianity in the world ? The question is involved and also contentious. On the one hand many are so rightly indignant at the suppression by the dominant Church of freedom of thought and investigation—and at its frequent support of the existing framework of society, however tainted with oppression and injustice—that, identifying Christianity with the Church, they condemn it as an enemy of mankind. On the other hand it is contended that, buried and well-nigh crushed by

all the oppression and intolerance that has often characterized official Christianity, there has been, from the first, an inner core of free and vital personality, a well-spring of spiritual liberty, which has not only enabled Christianity to reform its own institutions, but has been a leavening influence in the world at large. This is my own view of the matter, and I believe it to be historically justified. This secret leaven is due to the sense, which all the corruptions of Christianity never obliterated from the minds of Christian people, of the inherent worth of all manhood in the sight of God. Unfortunately it has often required the criticisms, savage at times, of the opponents of our religion to awaken believers to the real implications of this principle, and to show them how, if they believe it, they ought to put it into action.

Let us look first at Liberty in the sphere of moral responsibility. From the first there was, in the followers of Jesus, a consciousness that each of them was finally responsible not to any constituted human authority but to God alone. "We must obey God rather than men" was the answer of the first Apostles to the prohibition put by Jewish authority on their "teaching in the name of Jesus."¹ Though at that time they were certainly loyal Jews, they recognized that a higher authority than man's had the first claim on their allegiance. This can only mean that they saw, in the heart of each human personality, an inner shrine where the soul stood face to face with God alone, and in which no laws and prohibitions devised by man could rightly interfere. It was a tremendous challenge to man's authority, an assertion of the inviolable liberty of the human spirit to follow, even in defiance of man-made law, what it believes to be the will of God.

When the time came the Christians did not hesitate to take the same stand against all the might of the Empire.

¹ Acts v. 29 ; compare iv. 19, 20.

The Roman authorities soon saw that Christianity was not like other religions, able to take its place among imperial institutions. That was why from time to time they tried to suppress it, while leaving other religions alone. The imperial persecutions were much more political than religious. The Roman rulers saw more clearly than most of the Christians the probable results of admitting the claims of a society that related itself to a higher law than that of the State. On the whole the Christians stood firm, and chose torture and death rather than bow to "the image of the beast." And it was this faithfulness that more than anything else (in the judgment of contemporary observers, like Tertullian) caused Christianity to spread. The spectacle of frail men and women standing up to the might of Rome, and refusing to be quelled by it, because conscious that their first responsibility was to an inner Judge, imparted a new sense of the worth of human nature and a new dignity to human life.

The same may be said in regard to persecutions by the Church itself. We all recognize now that the attempt to coerce the human spirit in matters of belief, to mould the minds of men by force into accord with a prescribed pattern of thought, was a ghastly mistake, doomed to inevitable failure. Most of us would probably agree that it was contrary to the very genius of the Christian religion. Yet for many centuries the idea that it was necessary thus to compel men to believe (or profess) "the truth" held undisputed sway over the minds of men. Even the Reformation, though at first it promised a mighty deliverance for the soul of man from the shackles of authority, proved false to its own foundation, and persecution of Roman Catholics, as well as of Anabaptists, Quakers and sectaries, went vigorously forward. The Toleration Act of 1689 was a belated acknowledgment that the coercion of belief, which nearly all parties in the Church

had attempted, was in fact impossible. It was no doubt dictated by political expediency rather than by Christian principle.

In spite of this, and while we recognize how valuable were the contributions afterwards made to securing general support for the new principle of Toleration by Voltaire and other disbelievers in Christianity, its introduction is really due to Christian believers. The pioneers who first ventured to take the risk of putting it into practice as part of the law of a community were some of the Christian non-conforming bodies in the American Colonies. The first definite claim for entire freedom of conscience in religious matters seems to have been made by an obscure Baptist, one Leonard Busher, of London, in 1614.¹ Roger Williams, also (I believe) a Baptist, and an exile from Massachusetts, embodied the principle in the constitution of the settlement he established at Providence. In 1641 it was definitely made the basis of policy in the larger colony of Rhode Island, also founded by liberty-loving Christians for whom the cast-iron Presbyterianism of Massachusetts had no room. "It was here that the principle of spiritual freedom got its most impressive exhibition in primitive American history."² William Penn, the Quaker, wrote vigorously in defence of entire liberty of conscience, and made it the foundation of his colony of Pennsylvania, founded in 1682.³ His "Fundamental Constitutions" lay down that "every person that does or shall reside therein shall have and enjoy the free possession of his or her faith and exercise of worship towards God"; and that "all persons who profess to believe in Jesus Christ . . . shall be capable to

¹ R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 413.

² R. M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, p. 21.

³ In the case of the Quakers, the Christian principle of the inner worth of all human personality was strongly reinforced by their belief in the Light of Christ in the souls of all men.

serve this government in any capacity, both legislatively and executively.”¹

The latter passage shows that civil liberty was, equally with liberty in matters of belief and worship, in the mind of Penn. He introduced democratic institutions to the full, in order that, as he wrote to his friends, “I might leave myself and successors no power of doing mischief, that the will of one man may not hinder the good of a whole country.”² It is worth consideration how far the spread of democratic feeling and the love of liberty in all countries, which has marked the last century and a half especially, has been due to the unconscious working of the Christian leaven—to a growing perception of the worth of each human personality.³ Many of the revolts against oppression and injustice have, of course, like the great French Revolution, been carried out by men who were in violent revolt against Christianity; and yet, without its unconscious influence, the conviction that the struggle for liberty was worth undertaking, and worth suffering for, might well have been lacking. And perhaps it may be said of most of the ethical teachers and leaders of the modern world—men like Shelley and Wordsworth and Emerson, Carlyle and Mazzini and Ruskin—that, whether or not they called themselves Christian, without Christianity they would have been well-nigh impossible. Jeremy Bentham was probably unaware that he owed anything to Christianity; but where else did he obtain

¹ Sharpless, *op. cit.*, pp. 120 ff. It is remarked that “at that time there were practically no professing non-Christians, except perhaps a very few Jews.”

² Sharpless, *Selections from the Works of William Penn*, p. 53.

³ Compare A. J. Carlyle, *The Christian Church and Liberty*, pp. 124 ff.: “The Christian religion has thus had a not unimportant share in the development of what is sometimes called the democratic sense of the modern world. For this democratic sense is, after all, nothing more than the expression, in terms of organization, of the equality of human souls. . . . It is the principle that no individual can be sacrificed recklessly and involuntarily to other individuals, that the culture of a great society cannot be built up on the sacrifice of the many to a few.”

his formula, and why else did he find among his readers a willing recognition of its truth, that in providing for "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," *every one is to count for one, and no one for more than one?*

But democracy and political liberty cannot yield their fruit of human happiness and welfare unless there is also liberty in the economic sphere. There must be freedom, not for the few to amass vast wealth, as under a system of private property political liberty enables some of them to do, but for the many to develop to the full the highest capacities with which they have been endowed. What has Christianity done for this? The Mediæval Church, with all its corruptions, and its support of Feudalism (the antithesis of the equal worth of all men), did strive steadfastly to secure and maintain some measure of justice in economic relations. After the Reformation, economic causes, together with the weakening of the Church, led to the gradual disappearance of the former restrictions on the acquirement of wealth, and "free enterprise" took the field. The fruit of this, in the Industrial Revolution of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was the enormous increase of material wealth and the virtual enslavement of vast masses of the "proletariat." And, for the most part, the Church raised no voice against, nor did the Christian conscience condemn, the maxim of "buying in the cheapest market (even when this was the market of human labour) and selling in the dearest." The great capitalists of the new England were largely the descendants of Puritans or Methodists; many of its chief bankers were Quakers. Again, as in the case of Slavery, the awakening of the conscience of Christians to the real nature and requirements of the religion they professed was slow and halting, and it is still very far indeed from complete.

Yet we must not close our eyes to the fact that—if many of those who have striven hardest for opening to the wage-

earners a full opportunity for the development of their own personality have often, like Robert Owen, been non-Christian—in our own country, at least, members of the propertied class have given their lives freely to promoting the best interests of their poorer brethren, and this in the name of Christ. One of Robert Owen's most active supporters was William Allen, a Quaker. Lord Shaftesbury, the Evangelical, was animated by the purest Christian motives in devoting himself to the advocacy of the early Factory Acts; and on the opposite side in politics John Bright, while mistakenly opposing these Acts in the genuine fear that they would hamper trade and cause unemployment, was equally zealous in the endeavour to secure cheaper bread for the people by the abolition of the Corn Laws. Nor must we forget the "Christian Socialists" of the middle of the nineteenth century—F. D. Maurice, J. M. Ludlow, Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley. However little may have been actually achieved by the Co-operative Societies which they founded, they were fired by a genuine passion to remould the whole industrial system on Christian principles, by substituting mutual help for the scramble for profits.

Thus, on a broad view, there are good grounds for holding that the working, often unperceived and unacknowledged, of the Christian principle of the worth of man as man, has been a factor in human progress that has won its way against all the reactionary forces with which official Christianity has too often identified itself, and all the selfish interests that have so constantly blinded, and still blind, the eyes of many Christians to the real demands of their religion. The coming of the Kingdom of God can mean nothing less than the opening up, for every living soul of the human race, regardless of race or nation, rank or colour, full liberty of development for the Godlike powers with which it has been endowed.

SUMMARY

Decadent conditions of sexual and family life in the days of Jesus, among Greeks, Romans and even Jews. Jesus appears to have deliberately made marriage indissoluble, and was so understood by Paul. This rigidity rested on his insight into the worth of the personality of women and children ; and his whole teaching was steeped in the atmosphere of the family. Yet there is in it no trace of oriental asceticism ; the renunciation he demands for the sake of the Kingdom is the condition of the enrichment of personality.

Early Christianity largely revolutionized home life in the ancient world, greatly raising the estimation in which women and children were held. But the ascetic ideal very soon invaded the Church, and led to widespread desertion of the common duties of life. A double moral standard, for the "perfect" and for the ordinary person, came to be taught and generally accepted. This was partly countered by the Franciscan movement, and was repudiated by the Reformers. While Protestantism has produced few saints of the Catholic type, it has probably done much to raise the standard of family life.

The Christian standard needs upholding by showing that it is what Nature requires for the preservation and progress of the race. It is on the moral plane that human progress must proceed ; and the Family is the best school of character that mankind has yet produced.

CHAPTER XI

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

OF all the relations of life there is none fraught with greater issues for the welfare of the human race than that between men and women ; and, depending on this, the relation between children and their elders, including the provision made for the nurture and training of the rising generation. Up to the present time the main feature of human history under this aspect has been the development of the monogamic group called the Family—where two parents, in lifelong union, with their children, bound together by ties of mutual affection, train one another in character and mutual service. Is this a permanent feature of human life, or is it a passing phase, destined to give place to other methods, such as placing the responsibility for the nurture and care of children not upon their parents but upon the whole community ? A full discussion of this question would be beyond our scope. We have to ask what Christianity has done to raise and purify sexual relations, and—assuming for the present the permanence of the family—to strengthen its life.

There appears to be general agreement among historians that under the early Roman Empire the prevailing conditions of family life were low and in some respects decadent.¹ Among the Greeks, at least since early Homeric days, the status accorded to women had not made them the equals and partners of men. Marriage was regarded mainly as a convenience for securing legitimate sons “ to continue the activities of the father in service to the State and to the

¹ For this see Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, chap. v.

Gods,"¹ and extra-marital relations of the husband to other women were treated almost as a matter of course. The Athenian wife was for the most part expected to devote herself to the duties of home, and was not educated with a view to sharing in the man's intellectual and political interests. The only women at Athens who took any appreciable part in this larger life were the *hetairæ* or courtesans, whose calling was not regarded as disgraceful. Hence the mother's influence counted for little in the training of most children. In early Rome it had been different;² but we have only to look at the writings of Roman historians and satirists to be aware of a widespread judgment that by the first century of our era the old ideals of respect for women and purity in the home had become tarnished and degraded, that sexual licence was poisoning life at the fountain-head. Tacitus, for example, contrasting the vigour of the German tribes with the luxury and frivolity of his own people, says in one of his terse and biting sentences that among the Germans "*Nemo illic vitia ridet, nec corrumpere et corrumpi sæculum vocatur.*"³ Among the Jews an even higher standard of family life than that which prevailed in early Rome had been aimed at by the national legislators and largely maintained. The sexual excesses characteristic of most Semitic religions had been rigorously banned; the Jewish man had been exhorted by his sages to avoid the "strange woman"; the example of purity in Jewish as contrasted with pagan homes was no doubt one of the chief influences for good

¹ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, art. "Family (Greek)," Vol. V, p. 735.

² "The Roman religion was essentially domestic, and it was a main object of the legislator to surround marriage with every circumstance of dignity and solemnity. Monogamy was, from the earliest times, strictly enjoined; and it was one of the great benefits that have resulted from the expansion of Roman power, that it made this type dominant in Europe." (Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 298.)

³ Tacitus, *De Germania*, 19, 3.

that, in the first century, were being exercised by the groups of Jews then scattered throughout the cities of the Græco-Roman world. Hosea and other prophets had given a deep religious sanction to the ideal of marital fidelity by making its absence a figure of the unfaithfulness of the nation to its God. The simple homes of Galilee with which our Lord was familiar were probably among the purest and happiest that the ancient world could show—unmarred either by licence on the one hand or on the other by the ascetic notion that sexual relations were in themselves unclean. Only among the Essenes did oriental dualism and asceticism begin to affect the Jews. This fact supplies, I believe, the real answer to the objection sometimes made that Jewish ethics attached exaggerated importance to matters of sexual regularity. Rather, the Hebrew legislators and prophets would seem to have shown greater insight than was found elsewhere into the real conditions of strength and permanence in a human society; and the apparent indestructibility of the Jewish race is the best tribute to this insight.¹ Yet even in the cities of Palestine, where in the days of Jesus pagan rulers and traders mingled with the Jews, many of the latter succumbed to the temptation to imitate the luxury and vices of their more highly “civilized” neighbours; and Rabbis of the school of Hillel were interpreting very loosely indeed the Mosaic law of divorce.

Such were some of the aspects of the world in which

¹ “The Hebrews were always remarkable for the intensity of their family feeling; the strength of their nation lay in the depth, variety and richness of the characters which were created in their homes; and their moral and spiritual progress is largely the evolution of their domestic life. In their Scriptures the imperfect relations of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, master and servant, host and stranger, were displayed with a fine healthy realism; and under each head there is slowly but surely developed an ethical ideal which is the preparation for the perfect Christian type of the family.” (*E.R.E.*, art. “Family (Biblical and Christian)”, Vol. V, p. 723.)

our Lord scattered the seeds of his teaching. He laid down no *new* principles for regulating the relations of men and women to one another. What he did was to call his Jewish contemporaries to live up to the true principles enshrined in their sacred law. Monogamy he takes for granted, as obviously the Divine intention. When confronted by the Sadducees with the difficulty of applying its rules to the imagined resurrection life, he raises the whole problem to a higher level by an answer of supreme insight and sanity—explaining that marriage concerns the physical plane of existence only, and that in the supersensuous world such difficulties can never arise.¹ While, however, he does not profess to enunciate any new principle, he is at pains to apply the old and recognized principles in the most uncompromising manner. In this respect his treatment of the question of marriage is in marked contrast with the way he deals with other aspects of social life. As a rule he does not concern himself with the form or outer organization of human society, but declares the basic principles of the Kingdom of God, which each generation must learn to apply to its own particular conditions. Here, however, he goes into detail, laying down the definite rule that the marriage bond is indissoluble. This rule he traces to the original Divine intention, which he declares to have been obscured even by the legislation attributed to Moses. "For the hardness of men's hearts" a man had been permitted to divorce his wife, provided a bill of divorcement was given her; but this concession to the supposed necessities of frail human nature he sweeps away.² There can be little doubt that the question raised by the Pharisees about divorce, which occasioned this pronouncement, was

¹ Mark xii. 18-25.

² *Ibid.*, x. 2-11, Luke xvi. 18. The passage on divorce is Deut. xxiv. 1-4, where a man is permitted to divorce his wife if he finds any "unseemly thing" in her, and the woman is set free to marry another man; but she may not return to her first husband.

intended to get Jesus into trouble with Herod Antipas, who had married Herodias, his brother's wife.¹ What he implies, by quoting the primitive dictum from Genesis (ii. 24), "and they shall be one flesh," is that marriage is essentially as indissoluble as any other natural relation. A son can never cease to be a son, or a brother a brother, whether recognized or not; and so a husband is husband to his wife, and the wife is a wife to her husband, as long as life lasts. That, he says, was God's intention. Paul appears to have interpreted the phrase "one flesh" quite literally, and to have inferred that sexual intercourse makes a man and woman one in some hyper-physical manner.² On this belief is founded the Roman sacramental theory of marriage, which was rejected by the Reformers and which it is needless now to discuss.³ All that we need to note is that Jesus drew close the bonds of marriage in a way that startled and perplexed his disciples, who seem never to have heard the like before.⁴ There can, I think, be no

¹ Professor F. C. Burkitt points out (*The Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 100) that, in the Old Syriac version of Mark x. 11, 12, the prohibition of a woman putting away her husband and marrying another man is put first. He thinks this represents the original form of the saying, and that, the case of a woman putting away her husband being almost unheard-of, it is only to be explained as a direct allusion to Herodias. In both Mark and Luke re-marriage after divorce is directly forbidden. In Matt. v. 32 and xix. 9 an exception is admitted: "save for the cause of fornication," or "except for fornication." No one seems to know what this means, and there has been endless discussion of the question whether or not it is a genuine part of the saying. To me it seems probable that Mark and Luke are nearer to the actual words of Jesus. In any case it is not clear that the exception is intended to permit the marriage to another person even of the "innocent" party. (See Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, Vol. I, pp. 352 ff.)

² 1 Cor. vi. 15-18, Eph. v. 25-32.

³ E.R.E., Vol. VIII, "Marriage (Christian)," p. 439.

⁴ Matt. xix. 10; compare Mark x. 10. It is doubtful whether the words that follow in Matthew concerning "eunuchs" really belong here (Plummer, *Commentary on Matthew*, p. 260 f.). "The passage must be compared with our Lord's declaration that his disciples must be ready, if the call should come, to part with everything they possess for his sake."

reasonable doubt that Jesus deliberately made the marriage bond indissoluble.

For this rigidity, so far as our sources of information tell us, he gave no reason except the quotation from Genesis. It seems to have been a part of his intuition of the will of God. But we must read his words in the light of his attitude to women and children, which is markedly different from anything found elsewhere in the ancient world. Women he meets and talks to without any false modesty, and with exactly the same respect that he shows to men; children he loved to have in his arms, and declared that "of such is the Kingdom of heaven." In the uninventable story of the woman taken in adultery, which has found its way into the fourth Gospel,¹ he makes the standard of purity for men and women the same—not in abstract terms but by a direct and effective appeal to the consciences of the accusers. In the same Gospel he is reported to have expressed his very deepest thoughts concerning the spiritual worship God desires to an alien and degraded woman by the well at Sychar.² In a Pharisee's house he defends himself against the slur cast upon him by his "respectable" host, who is shocked that a religious teacher, in *his* house of all places, should allow himself to be touched by a prostitute.³ It is by such acts, even more than by direct teaching, that he shows his insight into the inner worth of every human soul, the equality of all mankind in the sight of God—an insight which even the most inspired of his followers were far from fully sharing. Paul had a glimpse of the truth when he declared to the Galatians that "in

¹ John vii. 53–viii. 11, perhaps from the "Gospel according to the Hebrews."

² Whether or not this conversation actually took place, the record shows at least what the evangelist thought that Jesus would have been likely to do and say. But in my judgment it is hardly possible to think that it has no basis in fact.

³ Luke vii. 36–50.

Christ there is neither male nor female"; but at times he speaks of women as distinctly inferior to men.¹

It was undoubtedly this intuitive sense of the essential worth of all women and children that lay beneath his prohibition of divorce. For it is on the woman as child-bearer that the heaviest burden entailed by irregular sexual unions necessarily falls—at least when these relations lead to offspring, and when society rests on the family, as in the most advanced civilizations it has so far done. In such a society it is only where marital fidelity is preserved that children are given a fair chance of right development. The teaching of Jesus on marriage and the family is of one piece with his whole outlook on life. In the atmosphere of the family his thoughts were steeped. It was in the little home at Nazareth that he himself learned to serve,² and its lessons that he wrought into some of his inimitable parables.³ His very name for God was "Father," and his followers were to be "brothers" one of another; the Kingdom of God itself was to be but a larger family, embracing potentially the whole human race.

And yet his rigorous sexual morality shows no sign of Essene asceticism. Jesus himself contrasts his own way of life with that of John the Baptist. "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." ⁴

¹ Gal. iii. 28; 1 Cor. xi. 7-10, xiv. 34, 35; Eph. v. 22-24, etc. Jesus "abolishes the idea of a husband's property rights in his wife, and liberates her spirit from the last trace of servility and abjectness. He never commands her to be in subjection to her husband, and never traces the transgression of mankind to her weakness. He simply treats her as an equal." (*E.R.E.*, Vol. V, p. 726.)

² Luke ii. 51.

³ Glover, *The Jesus of History*, chap. ii.

⁴ Matt. xi. 19. The sentence that follows, "Wisdom is justified (i.e. shown to be right) by her works" (or, as in Luke vii. 35, "at the hands of her children") may possibly indicate that Jesus thought of himself as the Divine Wisdom of Prov. viii—an identification which was the starting-point of the Logos doctrine. In any case he claims that his joyous life was, no less than the sombre morality of John, along the path marked out by Divine Wisdom.

In the fourth Gospel he blesses with his presence a marriage feast, and shows his approval of it by turning water into wine.¹ There is only one passage in the Gospels in which Jesus even appears to suggest that celibacy is better than marriage (Matt. xix. 12), and this, as already indicated in a note, should probably be taken as one of his stern demands for the renunciation of all lower goods, including even life itself if needful, for the sake of the Kingdom. There may be occasions when this highest good requires the cutting off (as it were) of the right hand, or the plucking out of the right eye; and it may equally demand the renunciation of the joys of marriage and home. But we should certainly be wrong in inferring that Jesus thought of a man with only one hand or one eye as necessarily nearer to the Kingdom than a whole man.

It is on this line that we must interpret his rigorous demands for the severance, if needful, of home ties.² These have often been misunderstood. It has been widely held that in making these demands Jesus showed himself indifferent to the claims of human love and of the duty we owe to those nearest us; and men have supposed they were obeying him when inflicting cruel wrongs on others who required their support and help. The truth that underlies these seemingly repellent passages was grasped by the Elizabethan song-writer who, when called to part from his love by the claim of what he believed to be a larger duty, said :

I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.³

¹ Again the significance of the incident is not dependent on its literal historical truth. Even if an allegorical meaning is foremost in the mind of the narrator (so Muirhead, *The Message of the Fourth Gospel*, chap. v.), he would not have told the story if it had not been consistent with his conception of the character and mind of Jesus.

² See especially Luke ix. 57-62, xiv. 26, 27, 33. "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

³ Richard Lovelace, "To Lucasta, on going to the Wars."

To yield to the claims of the highest love, and for its sake to part for the time with the joys of a love which, though right in its place, is not all-embracing, so enriches the soul of man that even the lower love is fuller, purer and more worthy than it could have been had the renunciation been refused. Jesus did not mean that there was virtue in renunciation for its own sake, for this may leave the soul harder, narrower, and more absorbed in self than it was before. What he did mean was that when duties appear to clash it is always the higher that must be followed ; and that by such a choice the soul will be expanded and better equipped for the right discharge of the lower. " Things that a man will not do for the love of woman he may yet do for the love of God " ; and may find that his power of loving is so enlarged that what was hard becomes easy.

So, in the early centuries of Christianity, the followers of Jesus brought into the world a standard of sexual relations, based upon a respect for womanhood and a sense of the worth and possibilities of childhood, such as the world had not known before ; and this became effective among people whom philosophy could hardly touch. Philosophers had exhorted men to practise self-control in the interests of the community, and many of them had doubtless set a worthy example in their own lives ; but, as T. H. Green powerfully showed, they dealt with it always from the man's point of view, without recognizing that for a man to use a woman as the servant merely of his own pleasure means the degradation of her personality.¹ The

¹ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, pp. 287 ff. " It was the actual condition of women, the actual existence of slavery, the fact that as yet there had been no realization, even the most elementary, of the idea of there being a single human family with equal rights throughout—it was this that rendered the Greek philosophers incapable of such an idea of chastity as any unbrutalized English citizen, whatever his practice, if he were honest with himself would acknowledge."

recognition that the personality of every woman and of every child is sacred was something new, and it largely revolutionized the home life of the ancient world. "There can be little doubt," says Lecky, "that, for nearly two hundred years after its establishment in Europe, the Christian community exhibited a moral purity which, if it has been equalled, has never for any long period been surpassed."¹ The darker vices of pagan society, with the practices of abortion and infanticide which prevailed, were sternly suppressed in the Church. But more powerful for good than this negative attempt to keep the Church pure was the positive example of happy family life which the Christians were able to show, and the strength and moral beauty manifested by many of their women and even children, who (like the men) during times of persecution freely chose torture and death rather than abjure their faith in Christ. The inner worth of womanhood and childhood was exhibited in deeds even more impressively than it was explicitly stated.

Unhappily there is another side, which cannot in truthfulness be overlooked. In the reaction from pagan licence many Christians, even from very early days, and increasingly as time went on, rebounded to the opposite pole of asceticism, with the refusal of all sexual relations as if they were themselves impure. Marriage came to be widely regarded in the Church as a second-best, allowable for those who could not practise abstinence, but at a lower spiritual level than absolute chastity. In the New Testament this view of marriage hardly appears. We may be thankful that it is entirely absent from the Gospels. There is a hint of it in one of Paul's letters,² and more than a hint in the Book of

¹ Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 11.

² 1 Cor. vii. 1-9, 32-35, where the idea of an early Parousia which would put an end to existing society is clearly in Paul's mind (*vv.* 29-31).

Revelation ;¹ but with these exceptions the New Testament gives no countenance to the idea of a double moral standard—exactng and optional for the “perfect,” but easier and obligatory for the common man and woman. Yet this doctrine very early took hold of the Church—partly through the influence of oriental ideas of the inherent evil of matter, and partly because its mind was occupied with the expectation of the early return of Christ to put an end to the existing world-order. Clement of Rome wrote to the Corinthians (about A.D. 95): “He that is pure in the flesh, let him be so and not boast, knowing that it is Another who bestoweth his continence upon him.”² Ignatius wrote to Polycarp (about A.D. 115): “If anyone is able to abide in chastity to the honour of the flesh of the Lord, let him so abide without boasting. If he boast, he is lost; and if it be known beyond the bishop, he is polluted.”³

As the second century went on, celibacy and virginity received ever increasing honour, especially among those who tended to Gnosticism and other forms of “heresy.”⁴ But it was in the third century, especially after the great Decian persecution about A.D. 250, that Christians in great numbers began to forsake the duties of home and business and citizenship, and to betake themselves to an ascetic life in the desert or in the monastery.⁵ For centuries the Christian ideal of saintliness was the life of the hermit or the monk, living without human ties for the sake (as was supposed) of entire devotion to Christ. The “religious” and the “secular” were divided, to the great detriment of

¹ Rev. xiv. 4. “these are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.”

² 1 Clem. xxxviii., in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 73.

³ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁴ C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, p. 282.

⁵ For an excellent account of this great movement and its consequences, see Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 101 ff.

both. The moral and intellectual energies of tens of thousands of the best men and women were largely wasted, and tended to atrophy for want of use. The bonds that bound men to their fellows were rudely broken, and the love of God was made to cover cruelty to man. Augustine on his conversion sent back to Africa the young woman who had borne him a son and was tenderly attached to him; and neither he nor his saintly mother Monica showed the slightest consciousness that he was acting basely to the woman he had loved and whom he was bound to care for.¹ The idea that sexual intercourse was itself unclean broke up what had been happy homes, and often poisoned the relations of couples who continued to live together, especially when the notion was held by one and not by the other. It degraded the ideal of womanhood, which primitive Christianity had done so much to ennoble, by representing woman as the tempter of man. And the double moral standard which accompanied it acted disastrously on the life of the Church (and through this upon the world) by entailing the attempt to enforce celibacy on the clergy, with results over which it is better to draw a veil.² In all probability the unnatural honour paid to virginity had no small share in bringing about the moral corruption that during the early Middle Ages prevailed alike among laymen and ecclesiastics, and almost reproduced the conditions of pagan society—with the additional shame that men were now more consciously sinning against the light. As soon as marriage came to be thought of as a concession to human weakness, an idea that is oriental rather than truly Christian, it was an easy inference that the married life is a life of permitted self-indulgence, and that one form of sensuality is not essentially worse than another.

A real though partial reform was wrought by St. Francis

¹ F. H. Stead, *The Story of Social Christianity*, Vol. I, pp. 110 ff.

² Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 328 ff.

of Assisi, who while himself living the ascetic life and requiring it of his "brothers," followed his Master in the honour he paid to women, and in practising natural and wholesome relations with them. His friendship with Clara was one of the greatest blessings of his life. Moreover, his formation of the order of Tertiaries, by which a way was found for multitudes of men and women to devote themselves to the life of the spirit and the service of Christ without leaving their ordinary duties, was one of the most beneficent achievements of the Middle Ages. Francis "had no desire to invade the home and despoil it; he wanted rather to penetrate it with a fragrant spirit of love, and to make all Christian hearts channels of love and happiness."¹

The Reformation of the sixteenth century broke down the distinction which the Church had made between the "perfect" and the ordinary Christian life, and between the spiritual and the secular callings of the Christian man. The awakened Luther, acting from considered principle, broke his monastic vows and married.² It has been said that the fundamental difference between the Roman and the Reformed churches is that the former holds that some Christians are called by God to a higher degree of holiness than others, while the latter believes that all are called alike to the highest holiness possible.³ That this contribution of the Reformation to human life has been all gain it would be rash to assert. Too often well-meant efforts

¹ Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 161.

² "The dualism in ethics that pervaded mediæval religionism, according to which there is an inherent antagonism between the spiritual and the material, the heavenly and the earthly, entirely disappears in Luther. The separation caused by sin is removed by redemption and regeneration, and the spiritual pervades the material, the heavenly the earthly. Hence the believer is not only a spiritual priest but also a spiritual king, and lord over all things; and his chastened enjoyment of them belongs to that gratitude which he owes to the Redeemer who has provided them for him." (*E.R.E.*, Vol. VIII, p. 201.)

³ *Expository Times*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 145.

to spiritualize the secular end in secularizing the spiritual. Protestantism has but rarely produced saints of the Catholic type and intensity ; but there would seem to be good grounds for holding that it has raised the general level of Christian living. Puritanism to-day has few defenders ; but the world owes much to the standard of family life set up among the English-speaking peoples by the Puritans, the Independents, the Baptists, the Quakers and the Methodists. Yet it appears that in our own day, even where this influence has been largely effective, divorce is greatly on the increase, especially in the United States and in some of the British Colonies, where prosperity and an easygoing materialism tend to dissolve restraint. It is mainly the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans whom we have to thank for the most vigorous efforts to stem what often seems like a rising tide of profligacy. It is not only in France, where political liberty has been won in the teeth of ecclesiastical domination, and by men who for the most part have repudiated Christianity, but in the lands of the Reformation also, that the tragic figure of the prostitute haunts the streets and open spaces of our cities,¹ and reports of the proceedings at the Divorce Courts tell shameful tales of the violation of the decencies of home.

It would appear to be an urgent need at the present day that the true Christian ideal of Marriage and of the Family should be better understood and followed. The

¹ I wish at this point to offer an emphatic protest against the assumption made by Mr. Lecky (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 283), that the prostitute is the "most efficient guardian of virtue," because on her "are concentrated the passions that might have filled the world with shame." Is there any evidence to show that men who gratify their passions in this way do not, because this means of indulgence is open to them, "pollute the purity of countless homes" ? And, if there were, how many decent women really wish to have their own purity protected at the cost of the degradation of other women ? The assumption appears inconsistent with that sense of the inherent worth of all womanhood which at times Mr. Lecky displays.

institution of the family is now assailed from two sides. A selfish and luxurious class chafes against its restrictions, and wishes to loosen the "intolerable strain" of unhappy unions by making divorce and re-marriage easy. At the same time the more extreme among Socialists, and Communists generally, assail the family as the last stronghold of private property, and wish to merge it in a large synthesis of life. The present marriage system, which is said to be based on the economic dependence of the woman on the man, will, it is urged, give place to temporary unions terminable at the wish of either party; and the separate home will be superseded by associated life in which children will be the care, not of their parents mainly, but of society as a whole.

To meet this double danger something more is needed than an appeal to authority, whether of Church or Bible or even of Christ himself. It must be shown that the family is rooted in the needs of human nature, and that the monogamic union has a necessary place in the order of human development. Obviously no full treatment of this subject is possible here, even if I were equipped with the needful knowledge. I can but appeal to a few broad considerations, the truth of which would (I hope) be admitted by biologists and anthropologists. The approximately equal numbers of males and females, the secret of which has so far been jealously guarded by Nature, point to monogamy as Nature's intention.¹ And all our evolutionary study seems to show that Nature cares far more for the preservation and progress

¹ According to a careful calculation made on the basis of the latest figures available before the Great War, the ratio of males to females among the white races of the world was 100 to 101 : males 276,953,092, and females 278,569,567. In the British Empire the ratio was 100 to 102 ; in Europe (excluding Russia) 100 to 103 ; in Russia almost 100 to 100 ; in North and South America about 105 to 100. Among the Japanese the ratio was 102 to 100 ; among the negroes of North America 100 to 101. (From a leaflet issued by the Friends' Association for the promotion of Social Purity, 1919.)

of the race than for the comfort and convenience of the individual: that the monogamic union is based upon human needs much more far-reaching than the temporary happiness of "the parties concerned." It has survived, in competition with other methods like polygamy, mainly because it provides the best means of the efficient care and training of the rising generation—a point that current discussions about divorce nearly always overlook.

The young of the human race differ from those of most other animals in the long period of their helpless infancy. In civilized countries a child requires more or less care from older people up to (say) its twentieth year. Its natural guardians are its parents. If these discharge their trust, and if the child-bearing period of the woman's life extends over twenty years, this means that, to give the youngest child the best chance possible, the father and mother must normally keep together for at least forty years; that is to say, their union must be life-long.¹

This appears to be a fairly effective answer to those who advocate loose unions between the sexes while retaining the family as the basal institution; but not to others who think the family can be dispensed with, and all children brought up by the State. As to this we have not, so far as I am aware, experience enough to justify the positive statement that such a method would end in disaster, however confident we may feel that such would be the case. But this we can say: that it is on the moral plane rather than on the physical that human development is now progressing: it is the morally fit races that are tending to survive, rather than those whose strength is mainly physical

¹ The first enunciation of this doctrine is attributed to Mr. John Fiske, in his *Cosmic Philosophy*, 1875. See Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 136. The whole of chapter iii, "The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Family," is illuminating.

or intellectual.¹ And the Family is undoubtedly the best school of moral character that humanity has ever known—not for children only, but for their parents also. It is in the family, more than anywhere else, that we learn unselfish love, patience, self-control and consideration for others. It is here that common interests take precedence over those of the individual. The family appears to be Nature's lasting protest against selfish Individualism on the one hand, and on the other against a Communism that disregards the individual and thinks lightly of his moral character.

On grounds of human experience, and in the light of present-day knowledge, it seems that we can begin to verify the truth of our Lord's intuition into the supreme worth of all personality, and into the lasting importance for human welfare of preserving the sanctity of marriage and the home. Perhaps in this matter as in others he was indeed the "Lord of Thought." We shall infer from his teaching, and from that of the Christian Church at its best, that the true remedy for unhappy marriages is to be sought *from above* and not from below: not in seeking to loosen the bond, for the temporary comfort of individual sufferers, but by raising it into conditions of permanence in the interests of the race. And this can only be done by purifying and ennobling our ideal of what marriage is and should be—treating it, not as a joke, but as the highest, holiest, most responsible relation into which human beings can enter; preparing young people for its difficulties and its duties by giving them, at the right time and in the right way, the needed information concerning sex relations; encouraging them to think of a pure human love, where self is transcended in devotion to another, as the nearest approach we know to an understanding of the nature of

¹ This broad generalization appears to me to be justified by history. It must not, of course, be assumed that in every war the victors are morally superior to the vanquished.

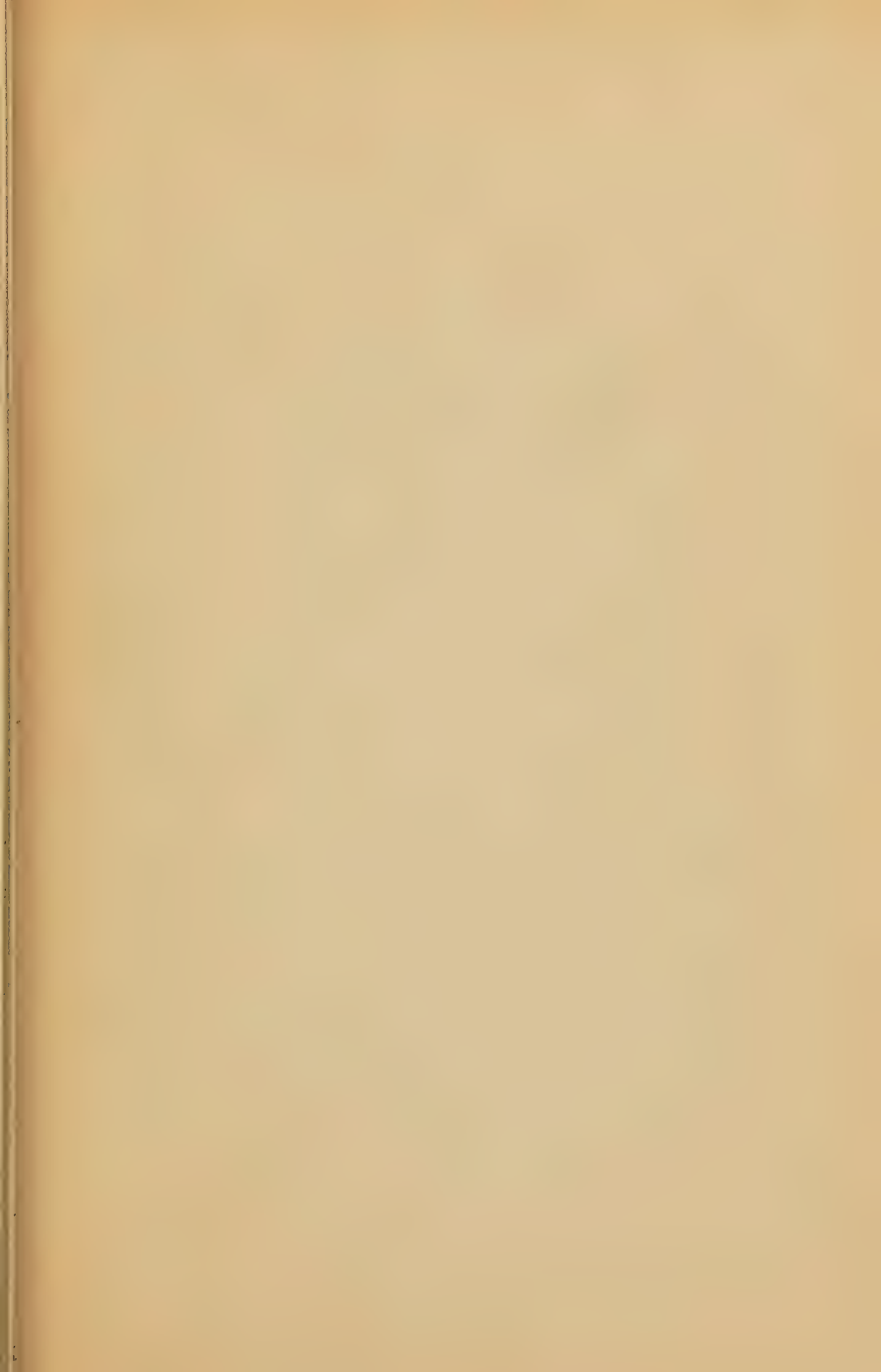
God Himself ; helping them to find in the family and the home the training in unselfish devotedness and patient love that will qualify them for the larger service of mankind.

I venture to conclude this chapter by quoting a part of the advice on this subject given to its younger members by the Society of Friends :

Marriage is an ordinance of God, appointed for the help and blessing of both man and woman, and for the right upbringing of the next generation. Our Lord, in his teaching, drew very close the bonds of marriage ; and the well-being of any people depends in large measure on the purity, strength and love that mark its family life.

The union of husband and wife is therefore fraught with momentous issues, and is not to be thought of lightly. Happiness and blessing in marriage depend first on the presence of devoted love, a love which is not the outcome of a merely passing attraction, but which includes a real respect by each for the personality of the other. Every such union should be undertaken in the fear of the Lord, and with a reverent attention to his counsel and guidance. It will be owned and blessed by him if the healthy love that draws two human souls together is sanctified by the larger love of Christ and of his brethren ; it will yield its fairest fruit as it is chastened by the discipline of care and trial bravely borne, and ripened into self-forgetting devotion by the mutual influence of parents and children. The family is the standing witness that man is not intended to live alone ; that he becomes what he was meant to be as his character is trained in unselfishness by responsibility for others, and by the claims and duties of a common life.¹

¹ *Book of Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends*, Part II, "Christian Practice," revised in 1925.



SUMMARY

Jesus did not deal explicitly with the ethics of War, any more than of Slavery ; but his method of overcoming evil was the way of the Cross. So, he taught, must be that of his followers. He was not lacking in patriotic feeling ; but desired that his people should do its part in fulfilling God's purpose for the world. After the Crucifixion his disciples understood that the sword could not be used for establishing the Kingdom of God. They set out to win the world by love and persuasion only ; but (owing to the conditions of the time) gave no special thought to the subject of War. Not till nearly A.D. 170 is there clear evidence of soldiers in the Roman armies. The great leaders of the Church remained " pacifists," and the Church Orders excluded soldiers from communion. The general opinion of the Church altered during the third century, and by A.D. 323, when Constantine became sole Emperor, there were many Christian soldiers. In the fourth century the Church became committed to approval of War, and so it has remained. Among the causes of change were (*a*) the protection of the Church by the State, (*b*) the theory of a double standard of Christian morality, (*c*) the Mohammedan onslaught on Christendom. Then followed (*d*) the military Christianity of the Crusades and the development of the ideal of Chivalry. The sword began to be used as an instrument of conversion.

The Reformation did not change the attitude of the Church towards War, and added to its causes. But War had been opposed by many Christian Mystics and " heretical " bodies, and this protest was continued by the Quakers, whose special contribution to the controversy was in showing the possibility of overcoming evil by justice and goodwill.

A real Christianity, based on insight into and courage in maintaining the principles of Jesus, remains the best hope of delivering humanity from self-destruction by War, international, industrial and racial.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTIANITY AND WAR

WE have now to consider the effect of Christianity on the practice of War—which may be defined as the method by which groups of human beings have sought to settle their disputes, and to defend what they believed to be their interests, by the trial of strength. Has Christianity anything definite to say as to the legitimacy of this method, and how far has it affected, or is it likely to affect, the readiness of men to resort to War? The question becomes more urgent every year; for the application of science to warfare is rapidly making it such a monstrous instrument of destruction that the issue no longer is, which of two groups of combatants will prevail. We are presented with a much more drastic alternative: which is to survive, Humanity or War?

So far as his teaching is recorded, Jesus does not deal directly with the legitimacy of War, any more than with that of Slavery. In both cases he uses the institution to illustrate his teaching, without explicitly stating whether he considers it right or wrong.¹ He commends with the utmost warmth the faith of a Roman military officer, and does not indicate whether or not he considers the profession a lawful one. In the main he evidently felt it to be his task not to lay down rules for the conduct of men's lives, but to bring to them a spirit and motive, an attitude of mind towards God and towards one another, in which questions of right and wrong would find their own answers. This attitude of the soul is the inner aspect of the Kingdom

¹ For Slavery see (e.g.) Luke xvii. 7-10; for War, Luke xiv. 31 f.

of God which he proclaimed, and which he regarded as the fulfilment of the prophetic dreams of a Messianic Age.

Whenever the prophets had tried to picture in any detail the features of the Reign of God, they thought of it as a time when wars should have ceased on earth. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."¹ It may be that, in so far as they expected this time of blessing to be ushered in through a scion of David's house, they thought of the age of peace as the outcome of a mighty military victory won by him over human foes. But Jesus, as we have seen, had drawn his picture of the Messiah and his work from a different source. Not the victorious warrior of Isaiah's dreams, but the suffering Servant of Yahweh, who did not strive or cry, but gave his back to the smiters, and poured out his soul unto death,² was his ideal of the Messianic vocation. And so for him the task of setting up the Kingdom of God was the infinitely difficult one of winning men by love to the uttermost, and not of conquering them by force.³

It did, no doubt, occur to him that he might use his Divine Sonship in the way that many of his people expected their Messiah to use it. He could have stood forth as a great military leader, and have marshalled his followers in revolt (possibly successful) against their Roman oppressors. This idea he deliberately put aside as a temptation of the devil.⁴ He chose that the way to the Kingdom should be the way of the Cross. He would not try to put down the evil of the world by overwhelming it with superior force, for this would nullify his mission, which was to change evil into good by bringing the hearts of men under

¹ Isa. ii. 2-4=Micah iv. 1-3.

² Deutero-Isaiah: Isa. xlii. 2, l. 6, liii. 12.

³ See above, pp. 26, 46 f., 51.

⁴ Matt. iv. 8-10; cf. John vi. 15, xviii. 36.

the sway of universal love. He knew that he had come, not to destroy men's lives but to save them.¹ And therefore he refused to allow his disciples to fight, either for himself or for his Kingdom.² The task of setting up the Kingdom—a task which he was bequeathing to them—could only be undertaken by those who had entered into its spirit.

It is here we catch the significance of the command of Jesus "Love your enemies"—as God, the Father of all, is kind even "toward the unthankful and the evil"³—and of his constant insistence on the forgiveness of others as a main condition of entering the Kingdom.⁴ Many students are recognizing now that what Jesus has in view is the spirit that must animate his disciples, not only towards one another and towards individuals outside their ranks, but to the Roman oppressors of their nation. Even if they are arbitrarily conscripted for civil service, they must shoulder the burden in a spirit of smiling generosity and carry it gladly for an extra mile.⁵ The disasters that come upon men in this world are not "sent" by God as a punishment for special sins; and, sinners as the Romans may be, those who plan revolt under the idea that He will intervene to punish them, but ignore His call for repentance,

¹ Luke ix. 55 (A.V.): possibly a gloss, but wholly in harmony with the spirit of Jesus.

² Matt. xxvi. 52. How did it happen that any of the disciples were wearing swords? Possibly through a prosaic misunderstanding of words of Jesus recorded in Luke xxii. 36. The report in v. 38 that they had "two swords" indicates that the disciples anticipated having to defend their Master by force. His reply, "It is enough," can only mean that he had had enough of such puerile misunderstanding. Only through a want of humour could these words be interpreted as referring directly to the two swords.

³ Luke vi. 35.

⁴ Matt. v. 23-26, vi. 14 f., xviii. 21-35; Mark xi. 25, etc. See above, Chapter I, pp. 26 f.

⁵ Matt. v. 41. Jews were exempted from compulsory *military* service for the Empire. (C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, p. 16).

are heading for irretrievable disaster.¹ In the matter of the tribute money (Mark xii. 13-17) he bids them go on quietly paying it, accepting the *status quo*.

Was Jesus, then, altogether lacking in patriotic spirit? Did the call of his country, the destiny of his nation, speak no word to his inmost soul? We should gravely misunderstand him if we thought that it was so. But his patriotism was of the prophetic order, like that of Jeremiah: his love for his own nation centred in the intensest desire that it should be fulfilling the purpose of God. He sees his people leaderless, mangled and prostrate like sheep worried by savage dogs, and he is "moved with compassion for them."² Twice in Luke he is reported as yearning over Jerusalem, longing to "gather her children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings"; but she has rejected "the time of her visitation."³ He felt that it was to his own people that he had been sent,⁴ not because he had no message for others, but because he longed inexpressibly that his nation should accept the Gospel and take up its prophetic task of being "a light to the Gentiles."⁵

Jesus loved his own people too well and too deeply to allow himself to be mixed up with attempts to recover the national independence by armed revolt against the galling tyranny of Rome. Even that tyranny need not hinder

¹ Luke xiii. 1-5. That this is the real bearing of the passage is shown by taking it in close connection with *vv.* 54-59 of the preceding chapter, with which the author joins it. Jesus manifested "a special longing that his fellow-countrymen as a whole should, by patience and generosity and love, seek reconciliation with the Romans rather than provoke them to more grievous oppression by a patriotic and vengeful ill-will." (Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, p. 35.)

² Matt. ix. 36.

³ Luke xiii. 34, xix. 41-44.

⁴ Matt. xv. 24.

⁵ Isa. xlii. 6, xlix. 6; cf. Luke ii. 32. In Deutero-Isaiah the "Servant" is certainly in the first instance the nation of Israel; and Jesus regards himself as its representative, in whom the prophecy of the Servant is being fulfilled.

Israel from fulfilling its world mission, if it would "render to God the things that are God's" as well as Cæsar's to Cæsar. Love for his own nation, and love for all humanity, were for Jesus two aspects of the same passionate devotion to the purpose of God, and there is no sign that he was conscious of any conflict between them. The Kingdom of God, as he conceived it, was to be world-wide; but it was through a repentant and converted Israel that he, as Israel's Messiah, was to establish it. Such would seem to have been the convictions with which he entered on his public ministry; but when it became apparent that the nation as such would not repent and would refuse its God-ordained task, he chose twelve disciples to be, as it were, a little Israel within the nation, whom he might train to carry on the work of the Servant when he himself should have been rejected and put to death.¹

For the disciples, then, as for the Master, the way to the Kingdom was to be the way of the Cross. As the fourth Evangelist reports a saying of Jesus, when faced with the near prospect of death, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."² The method of forgiveness, of bearing injury and oppression in a self-forgetting spirit of love to the offender, of overcoming evil with good, was his method because it was God's method, and it must be man's way too. The "pacifism" of Jesus is rooted in his vision of the Cross.

It was in this way that his followers very quickly came to understand the task he had bequeathed to them; from the time of their Master's crucifixion they seem to have abandoned once for all any hazy idea that the Kingdom was to be won by the sword. There are, indeed, indications

¹ This is suggested by the number twelve, and by such passages as Luke xxii. 30.

² John xii. 23-27.

that the Jesus-movement in Galilee and Jerusalem was, in the minds of some at least, associated with the idea of an armed revolt, and this probably goes far to explain the haste of the authorities to get Jesus put out of the way. He had chosen a "Zealot" as one of the Twelve. We know nothing about him except his name and title, "Simon the Cananæan" (Mark iii. 18). While it is almost inconceivable that Jesus would have chosen him had he belonged to the more violent section of the Zealots, the fact that he was selected at all indicates that some of them were drawn to Jesus, and perhaps that he was not without sympathy with some at least of their ideas and aims. The mention of Barabbas, "bound with those who had made insurrection and who in the insurrection had committed murder,"¹ and of the two "robbers" or "malefactors" who were crucified with Jesus,² points to an attempt at armed revolt having been made by some at any rate of the hangers-on of the movement. Probably they interpreted the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the driving of the money-changers from the temple, as a signal that the time was ripe, and fully expected that Jesus would declare himself as leader. The treachery of Judas Iscariot is hardly to be explained unless he had shared their views, and wished to force the hand of his Master.

If there was such a plot among some of those who had acclaimed the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, there is nothing whatever to indicate that he was aware of it, or that if he had been he would have lent it the slightest countenance. His whole course of action, so far as it is recorded, is one of perfectly consistent "pacifism." His Kingdom, as he is reported to have told Pilate, was "not

¹ Mark xv. 7. He is called a "robber" in John xviii. 40.

² Called *λησται*, "robbers," in Mark xv. 27, *κακοῦργοι*, "malefactors," in Luke xxiii. 32. If Luke's account is to be trusted (verses 39-43) one of these men was well acquainted with Jesus and believed him to be the Messiah.

of this world." And so at last his true disciples came to understand it. They had seen him submit to arrest and scourging, to ridicule and to crucifixion, without any display of supernatural power. "He saved others, himself he could not save." And then, after a day or two of utter disillusionment and despair, they had been assured, as it seemed by the clear evidence of their senses, that after all he had conquered death, and that their belief in him as Messiah had not been a delusion. He had vindicated by a supreme act his own principle that "whosoever would save his life must lose it"; he had brought victory out of defeat and life out of death. And, in assurance that his living Spirit was with them, they went out to conquer the world and aid in setting up his Kingdom by the same methods that he himself had used. Not once, in the Acts or the Epistles of the New Testament, do we read of any Christian dreaming that it could be set up by the use of human force.¹

The Christian Church, then, was launched on its world mission as an entirely "pacifist" body; it set out to win the world (as soon as its horizon expanded beyond the frontiers of Palestine) by love and persuasion only. But this is not to say that the early Christians had carefully thought out all the implications and applications of the way of life which their Master, by precept and example, had taught them. They had not, as we have seen clearly in the case of Slavery; and it is this want of philosophic and ethical reflection which explains some at least of their apparent inconsistencies in regard to War. It does not

¹ No doubt they did continue to expect that the Messiah, when he returned in glory, would overwhelm his enemies with supernatural might (2 Thess. i. 6-10, doubtfully by Paul, and Rev. *passim*); but this belief must be traced to the influence of Jewish Apocalyptic and not to the teaching of Jesus. It has also been pointed out that, owing to the conditions under which the first Christian churches were set up, there would be likely to arise in them an element of revolutionary radicalism, and that this is what Paul rebukes in Rom. xiii. 1, etc.

seem to have occurred to them to consider whether a converted centurion like Cornelius, or the soldier who kept the jail at Philippi, could consistently remain in the Roman army. Such cases in the first century were probably quite rare. The question whether military service was lawful for Christians was not brought home to them as a practical problem demanding solution. Those of them who were Jews or slaves were not liable to be conscripted into the Roman armies ; conscription in fact was not often resorted to. The Empire could usually get all the soldiers it needed by voluntary enlistment ; and not till nearly A.D. 170 do we begin to catch hints of Christians enlisting.¹

It would be impossible, without over-weighting this chapter, to give more than the barest summary of the evidence as to the attitude of the early Church to War, which has been collected and set out with admirable clearness and impartiality by Professor C. J. Cadoux in the exhaustive studies referred to below in a footnote. The following statements are, I hope, in accordance with the facts, so far as these are known.

(1) For about a century and a half after the death of Jesus, that is, to the time of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 161-180, the general judgment of the Church was quite adverse to War. War meant the destruction of human life, and human life had come to be regarded as a sacred thing. This statement by Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology* (addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius about A.D. 150), would probably have been universally accepted by Christians of the time :

Twelve men went out from Jerusalem into the world, and they were ignorant men, unable to speak ; but by the power of God they told every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach

¹ C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, pp. 16 f. In this book and the more elaborate *The Early Church and the World* the whole subject is treated in the light of all the available evidence.

all men the word of God. And we who formerly slew one another not only do not make war against our enemies, but, for the sake of not telling lies or deceiving those who examine us, gladly die confessing Christ.¹

Rather later (about A.D. 178) Celsus brought as one of his main charges against the Christians their want of public spirit, and appealed to them to help the Emperor in maintaining justice and to fight for him if he should call on them to do so ; for if all acted like the Christians the Empire would fall a prey to savages and barbarians. Harnack remarks on this that the charge of disinclination to serve in the army was undoubtedly well founded.²

There is, however, in the Christian literature of this period an absence of explicit statements that the calling of a soldier is wrong for the Christian. This may be ascribed to three main causes, apart from the want of thought already alluded to : (a) an indiscriminating acceptance of the Old Testament and its wars, as directly inspired by God ; (b) the persistent Apocalyptic expectation of Messianic war when Christ should return ; and (c) the frequent use of military metaphors in setting forth the Christian life as a "warfare." But there is no clear evidence, apart from the two allusions in the Acts already mentioned (to Cornelius and the Philippian jailer), that any Christians served as soldiers before about A.D. 165.

A change came shortly before A.D. 170, when we begin to find Christians in the Roman armies. There is ample evidence that the *Legio Fulminata*, occupied in a campaign against the Quadi in Eastern Cappadocia, contained Christian soldiers ; for a victory, commemorated on a column set up by Marcus Aurelius at Rome, was believed by the Christians to have been granted in answer to these soldiers'

¹ *Apol.* xxxix.

² C. J. Cadoux, *The Early Church and the World*, p. 274

prayers for rain.¹ It is not known that any disapproval of their being in the army was expressed by the Church of their day. Probably most of them were already soldiers before their conversion. The matter, it seems, was not considered of sufficient importance to justify the Church authorities in requiring them to leave the army—a course which would have entailed disgrace and perhaps another outbreak of persecution.

In the third century the question became acute, and the minds of Christians began to awake to its importance and to answer it in different ways. Hitherto the matter had been allowed to drift; its difficulties had not been clearly perceived or faced; and a growing laxity on many moral questions was coming over the Church at large. But the great leaders of the Church in this period—men like Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the East, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Cyprian in the West—as soon as they began really to face the problem reached a practically unanimous judgment that the Church had been right in condemning War. Tertullian declared (before he joined the Montanists) that “the Lord, in disarming Peter, unbuckled the sword of every later Christian.”² Rather later, in an eloquent passage, he wrote: “Is the laurel of triumph made up of leaves, or of corpses? Is it decorated with ribbons, or tombs? Is it besmeared with ointments, or with the tears of wives and mothers—perhaps of some even among Christians, for Christ is among the barbarians as well?”³ He freely admits, however, that some Christians did not view the matter as he did himself. In his *Apology* (A.D. 197) he adduced the presence of Christians in the

¹ The pagan accounts of the occurrence do not mention the presence of Christians in the army.

² *De Idololatria*, about A.D. 200. The Latin is given by C. J. Cadoux, *op. cit.*, p. 425 n. 2.

³ *De Corona Militis* (A.D. 211), 12. Tertullian joined the Montanists (partly out of sympathy with their stricter morality) about 206.

army as evidence that they had begun to fill the whole world : " With you we go on voyages, and serve as soldiers, and till the soil and trade." ¹ He states this simply as a fact, without expressing approval or condemnation ; many passages like those first quoted show clearly what his own view was. They also indicate that it was the bloodshed inseparable from a soldier's calling that he objected to, and not only (as has been suggested) its inevitable connection with idolatrous practices.

Hippolytus (A.D. 170-235) must have had some hand in framing the original " Canons of Hippolytus," with which the " Egyptian Church Order " is closely connected, though in their extant form they are overlaid with later material. They give detailed regulations for Church management ; and, as Cadoux shows, their original form is likely to have been more and not less stringent than the later. Even as they stand, however, they are perfectly clear in stating that a soldier is not to be received into the Church unless he abandons his profession. " A man who has accepted the power of killing, or a soldier, may never be received at all." ² " If a catechumen or a believer wishes to become a soldier, let them be rejected, for they have despised God." ³

A man of more powerful intellect than either Tertullian or Hippolytus was Origen, the great Alexandrian, who devoted much thought to this question. He is weakest when he tries to deal with the sanction of War in the Old Testament, for he has not the clue afforded by the conception of a progressive revelation, adapted to man's capacity to receive it.⁴ He endeavours, in Alexandrian fashion, to

¹ *Apology*, 42.

² *Hipp. Can.* xiii. 71.

³ *Egypt. Ch. Ord.* xi. 11. (Cadoux, p. 432.)

⁴ Cadoux points out that no Christian theologian during the first three centuries arrived at this conception, but that a glimmering of it is found in the *Dialogus de Recta Fidei* by an unknown author at the beginning of the fourth (*op. cit.*, pp. 550 ff.).

interpret the Hebrew wars allegorically, but of course without success. So far as the Christian's duty is concerned, his position is one of uncompromising "pacifism." In replying (about A.D. 248) to Celsus's attack on Christianity, he writes: "We fight for the Emperor more than others do: we do not serve as soldiers with him, even though he requires us to do so; but we do serve as soldiers on his behalf, training a private army of true religion by means of intercession to the Deity."¹ Here he writes as though he knew of no Christians actually serving as soldiers in the Roman armies; but meets the taunt of Celsus that they are lacking in public spirit by arguing that they do in fact aid the Emperor by their prayers and by striving to convert all men, even the barbarians, to their own peaceable principles. His conception of Christian "pacifism," therefore, is not merely negative but is positive. One real advance he makes, which has not been sufficiently recognized. He admits that wars have had a useful and necessary place in the lives of non-Christians, as the best means available *to them* for keeping order and preserving the State against attack; but Christ has shown a better way, which his followers must take.² There is no real inconsistency here, but the recognition that some wars may be justifiable on a sub-Christian plane of ethics, though they are not permissible for the Christian. It would be well if this principle—that ethical judgments must be relative to the degree of enlightenment reached by men—were even now more widely recognized than it is.

As the third century went on, the minds of Christians became more and more divided as to the legitimacy of War. The number of Christians in the Roman armies increased, though we must beware of accepting statements about whole legions being Christian. The fact that the

¹ *Against Celsus*, viii. 73.

² Cadoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 416, 435.

Emperors Diocletian and Galerius, about the end of the century, tried to purge the armies of Christians shows that the proportion must have been small. There was a growing tendency, on the part of some of the leaders of the Church, to approve such service as normal and right. The Church Orders were against it, as we have seen ; but how far they were observed in practice we do not know. And the most spiritually-minded of the leaders remained on the whole true to the older view. Arnobius and Lactantius, though with some wavering, upheld it. Further, the number of Christians who suffered martyrdom expressly on the ground of refusal to fight was very considerable.¹ In some cases the reason of their refusal was that soldiers were now required to sacrifice to the Emperor or to heathen gods ; in others the objection was explicitly to the taking of human life. The most celebrated of these is that of the young Maximilian, of Numidia, who in A.D. 295 was required to join the army in Africa, and refused on the ground that he was a Christian and could not fight. The proconsul told him that there were Christians in the army. " They know what is fitting for them," replied the youth ; " but I am a Christian and I cannot do evil." The matter of sacrificing to idols is not mentioned. He was led away to execution, and his stand for conscience was so far generally approved that the story was at once written down, and he was canonized as a saint.²

(3) After the accession of Constantine (with Licinius in A.D. 313, as sole Emperor in 323)—after his defeat of Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge under the sign of the Cross—after his nominal conversion to Christianity and his patronage and protection of the Church—the whole

¹ Cadoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 580-587

² Cadoux points out the awkwardness for the Roman Church, which officially approves of War, to have a conscientious objector on its calendar of saints (p. 586 n.).

attitude of Christians to War underwent a rapid change. The Synod of Arles in A.D. 314, with its enactment that any who "throw down their arms in peace" (whatever that may mean¹) are to be excluded from communion, left military service quite open to Christians; though the existence of the Church Orders shows that in large sections of the Christian community the provisions of that Synod can hardly have been accepted. The leaders of the Church now begin to speak with a different voice. "Athanasius, 'the father of orthodoxy,' declared that it was not only lawful, but praiseworthy, to kill enemies in war. Ambrose spoke similarly, if less baldly; while Augustine defended the same position with detailed arguments. In A.D. 416 non-Christians were forbidden to serve in the army."²

From that time onwards the Catholic Church has stood committed to approval of War—though often, both in earlier and later times, many of its members have been far from accepting the official position. There were in the fourth century further refusals of Christians to fight, which entailed at least one martyrdom; and the old opposition to War was continued by Gregory of Nazianzus, Chrysostom and Basil. "It is evident that in many quarters the settlement was accepted only gradually and with an uneasy conscience."³ In the long struggle between the Cross and the Empire the Cross had won; yet at what a cost! The Cross itself, the symbol of sacrificial love, had been degraded by Constantine into an emblem of war, under which he marched, as he believed, to certain

¹ The phrase used is "arma projiciunt in pace," the exact meaning of which is unknown.

² Cadoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 588 ff. Some of these passages are quoted at length by the same author in *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, p. 257.

³ *Ibid.*, *E.C.A.W.*, pp. 260 f. In *The Early Church and the World*, p. 579 n. 5, there is an appalling list of the crimes committed under orders by the armies of Licinius, in which some Christians may have been required to take part.

victory. The reputed nails from the Cross, sent him by his mother Helena, he had made into bits for his war-horse. The Church, overjoyed at her triumph and at the cessation of persecution, welcomed the protection of Constantine in a spirit that involved her in blind acceptance of his standards of righteousness. We may well ask ourselves whether we should regard the year 323 as marking the Christianizing of the Empire or the paganizing of Christianity. From this time there is a steady descent from what Mr. Lecky calls "the almost Quaker tenets of the primitive Church" ¹ down to the essentially military Christianity of the Crusades, and the view expressed by De Maistre, a French Catholic writer, that "Nothing in this world agrees so well as the religious and the military spirit." ²

Among the causes of this great change we must of course give a chief place (a) to the position into which the Church was brought by the patronage of the State. She felt herself compelled to bless and support the wars in which the State engaged, not only against barbarian invaders, but for advancing the ambitious schemes of its rulers. By accepting its support, the Church largely lost her power of independent criticism and opposition.

(b) Another, more subtle, factor may be found in the gradual emergence of the idea of a double standard of Christian morality—one more exacting for the "perfect" Christian, requiring "celibacy, poverty, aloofness from the world and entire devotion to the service of God," and another less difficult for the ordinary man, permitting marriage, business, public office, and military service. Eusebius the Church historian, early in the fourth century, is perhaps the first to give clear expression to this doctrine of the permissibility of military service for those who could not rise to "counsels of perfection." ³

¹ *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, p. 251.

² Quoted by Curteis, *Bampton Lectures*, 1871, p. 255.

³ Cadoux, *op. cit.*, pp. 298, 469, 578, etc.

(c) But a force still more potent to transform the standards of the Church arose in the seventh century, when the fighting religion of Islam threatened the whole of Christendom with destruction. A great religion had arisen inspiring its adherents with fanatical devotion; it had deliberately set out to win the world by the sword; it promised the joys of a sensual paradise to all its followers who should fall fighting the "infidel." What could the Church do but resist by force? Was she tamely to acquiesce, when the alternative offered to her members was "conversion" or death? Foolish as it may seem to say so, there was another way. The early Church would undoubtedly have met such a danger not by fighting but by martyrdom; and it is not extravagant to believe that it would thereby have convinced multitudes, even of its oppressors, as it actually did convince many of the Roman rulers, that it held the higher truth. We must remember that it was very largely the decadence of real Christianity that gave the Moslems their chance. The Church had well-nigh forgotten her Master in secular wranglings about the definition of his Person; the Christ of the Creeds did not call up in men's minds the lineaments of the Man of Galilee. Vast numbers who called themselves by his name—Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites and the rest—had been cut off from the fellowship of the Church, and many found the new religion purer and more vigorous than that which they had been taught to follow. There was a weapon better than sword or spear, but it had fallen from the Church's hands. Asia, Africa and eastern Europe soon lay prostrate before the Mohammedan invasions; from Africa the followers of the Prophet streamed through Spain into Gaul; and western Europe was only saved by their defeat near Poitiers by Charles the Hammer in A.D. 732.

(d) The downfall of the Roman Empire through suc-

cessive attacks by hordes of "barbarians"—Goths, Huns, and Vandals—broke up the foundations of ancient society, and left the world more than ever a prey to force. The Church undoubtedly did much to mitigate the ferocity of the barbarian onslaughts, and, by conversion, to raise many of the conquerors to a higher level of civilization; but the ideals of Chivalry and the practice of Feudalism which emerged as Europe began to settle down to a new order retained little of the spirit of early Christianity. The ideal Christian had become the knight or warrior—whether as embodied in the person of Charles the Great or dreamed of in the myths that were woven around the mythical figure of King Arthur; and Feudalism, with its insistence on human inequality and its close connection of rank with military service and subordination to a lord, made it hard indeed to recover the Christian conception of the worth of man as man. Moreover, the practice of the wholesale "conversion" of conquered peoples, by Charles the Great and others, made the profession of Christianity more and more nominal: vast numbers were now enrolled in the Church by baptism who had experienced no inward stilling of their pagan ferocity, and many of the old gods were still worshipped under the name of saints.

Mediæval Christianity, the Christianity of the Crusades, has little but its name to connect it with the religion of Jesus and his Apostles. The flower of Europe's manhood was wasted for centuries in futile struggles with the Saracen; and by the time of St. Francis the "Christian" society of Europe had become almost as corrupt as that of the pagan Roman Empire. If we think of religious wars as a whole, it is a question whether religion has not caused more bloodshed than it has prevented. With the discovery of new worlds across the Atlantic, the spectacle was repeated of "Christian" Powers commending to the heathen the religion of the Crucified by massacre and

pillage. Against such practices the official Church of Christ seems to have raised no effective voice. Protests against War in the name of Christ there were indeed in almost all periods of Christian history ; but for the most part these were made by the sects that the Church branded as " heretics " and did her best to exterminate with fire and sword and torture.¹ An exception to this general statement must be allowed in the case of the pre-Reformation movement towards purification of the Church, which is associated with the " Oxford Reformers," Erasmus, Colet and More.² These men, remaining in the Catholic Church, made a noble stand against its approval of War.

The Protestant Reformation did little or nothing to clear Christianity from this stain. Luther and Calvin both followed Augustine in defending " just " wars as right in the sight of God ³—a qualification which in modern times is meaningless. Until the advent of the League of Nations there has been no impartial authority to decide the justice of any conflict : each nation has been its own judge, and no nation has ever admitted that it was fighting in an unjust cause. What the Reformation did, necessary as it was in the interests of religious liberty, was to add another to the many causes of War, and to present the world with the spectacle of nations calling themselves Christians fighting one another under the banner of the Prince of Peace. By this time Europe was divided into nations, each of which had begun to develop a theory of absolute " sovereignty " over its own affairs ; and Christianity was no longer able to hold up a supra-national standard of conduct. On the contrary, each State now had its own Church, which blessed and supported its wars against others. Out of this anarchy a doctrine of " international

¹ R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*.

² F. Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers*.

³ *E.R.E.*, art. " War," by W. P. Paterson, Vol. XII, p. 682.

law " was developed by Grotius and others, which, however precarious in its foundations, has undoubtedly done something to limit the aggressiveness of nations, to establish a better standard of fidelity to treaties, and to mitigate some of the more ferocious methods of conducting wars.

The Quaker movement of the seventeenth century was, to a certain extent at least, the spiritual successor of other mystical movements which had sought to restore the spirit of primitive Christianity ; and, like most of these, it upheld from its origin the view that War is absolutely incompatible with our religion. It differed, however, from many of them in its repudiation of the " other-worldliness " which regarded the government of a country as a thing of " this world " with which the Christian had nothing to do except to render obedience. Its conception of Christianity was as large as that of life itself : no part of life could rightly be regarded as outside its sway. In business and politics, as well as in more directly spiritual concerns, the Spirit of Jesus must rule and find expression. Its rejection of War was, therefore, like that of Origen, not merely negative but positive : the Christian must not only refuse to fight, but must so act in all the relations of life that the causes of War would be done away. The early Quakers had a profound belief in the reality of the living Spirit of Christ : not only as the Christian's Guide and Director, to whom (and not to any human authority) absolute obedience was due ; but as, in measure, the inward Light that enlightens every man. To the Quaker every human being was, potentially at least, a temple of the Holy Ghost. As such it was impossible for the Christian to take part in destroying his body, even under the excuse of trying to " save his soul." And, further, he must be treated as a brother : the presence of the Light of Christ in his soul, however unaware he might be of it, meant that he would respond

to justice and goodwill, and would never wish to attack those who consistently dealt with him in this spirit.

It was in Penn's Colony of Pennsylvania that these principles received their chief expression in the actual government of a community. Penn had received a large tract of land near the mouth of the Delaware in payment of a debt due to him from the Crown ; but he paid for it over again to the Indian tribes who were dispossessed. He wrote to an Indian chief : " Thou wilt find the people who come with me are a plain and honest people, who neither make war on others, nor fear war from others, because they will be just." A celebrated Treaty was made with the tribes, which has been picturesquely described as " the only treaty that was ever made without an oath, and the only one that was never broken." For over seventy years, from 1682 to 1756, Penn's colonists lived and prospered without any armed defence against the Indians, while most of the other Colonies, where they were regarded as bloodthirsty savages, were continually being raided. The " Holy Experiment," as it has been well called, came to an end, not because its principles had failed, but because the Quakers were not in a position to continue it. They were in a minority of the population, and the British Government was against them. When war broke out with France, and Braddock had been defeated at Fort Duquesne in 1755, the French let loose some Indian tribes against the frontier. The Governor of Pennsylvania (who was not a Quaker) declared war on them in 1756, and the Quakers retired from the Assembly.

" Had William Penn's Indian policy prevailed, there was no need of Pennsylvania's embroilment in the French and Indian wars. The policy of peace is closely interwoven with that of justice. If other Powers are exasperated by unfair dealings, it will not do to fold one's arms and cry for peace. The experiment, in order to be conclusive,

must involve rigid uprightness on the part of the State that objects to War. When therefore the breakdown of Quaker policy in 1756 is pointed to, it should also be stated that it was very largely due to the injection into the political situation of non-Quaker management. As long as exact justice prevailed peace existed, and this is the lesson of Pennsylvania.”¹

Ought not the Christian Church in all its branches to have taught continually that justice and right dealing are the true preventive of War?

Apart from some little-known sects in eastern Europe, and to a certain extent the Dutch Mennonites, the small Quaker body is the only Christian community that in the name of Jesus maintains a steady testimony against War, and it stands almost alone in having set itself to remove from political action the spirit that leads to War.² None of the great churches, Catholic or Protestant, has declared all war to be inconsistent with the principles of Jesus, or ventured to assert that the evil in the world must always be met by Christians in the spirit of the Cross, and overcome, if possible, with good. And yet, in my view at least, it remains true that nothing but a real Christianity can rid the world of its last and greatest scourge. There are not wanting signs that many Christians, of all shades of belief and practice, are awaking to this truth. One of these is to be seen in the “World Alliance for the Promotion of International Friendship through the Churches,” founded at Constance on the very outbreak of the great world war of 1914-1918, which now has Councils in all the chief countries, consisting of representatives of the Protestant

¹ Sharpless, *A Quaker Experiment in Government*, pp. 273 f. See also the same writer in *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (ed. R. M. Jones), pp. 489-494.

² For a brief account of other Christian bodies that have at some time taken a similar stand, see Margaret Hirst, *The Quakers in Peace and War*, Introduction.

and Orthodox churches.¹ Though not bound by a "pacifist" creed, it is doing much to bring together Christians of different nations and varying creeds in mutual understanding and work for peace on earth.

There are, of course, other lines of approach to the elimination of War, none of which are to be despised. Statesmanship has done much, and can do far more, by promoting the practice of Arbitration, and developing the authority of the League of Nations, as well as by setting a higher standard of righteousness in international dealings. But Statesmen, in democratic countries at least, cannot be much in advance of the minds of the electorate. So long as the people of Great Britain believe that the navy is necessary for the protection of their commerce, no Statesman who wishes to remain in office is likely to propose its abolition. While national interests and "honour" are put in the forefront of a people's demands, they are likely to be the first thoughts of its diplomatists. It is perhaps impossible to exaggerate the effect for good that would be produced in the mind of the world as a whole by a really generous action on the part of a great nation—one that meant a real surrender of national interest for the manifest good of humanity—as, for example, a proposal by our own country for the internationalization and disarmament of Gibraltar, that the passage of the Straits might be free for the ships of all nations, both in peace and war. Yet, when the headmaster of a great English public school suggested similar action, there was such an outcry that he was obliged to resign his post. What did the Churches of Great Britain do to support Dr. Lyttelton at that time?

The appeal to Reason, demonstrating the folly and waste of War, and its failure to promote the real interests even of the victors in a struggle, is of the greatest service, for

¹ The Roman Church, so far, has been unwilling to join the Alliance.

Truth in the long run will have its way. But, when War threatens, Reason departs. Unless there is behind it an intuition, a conviction, that War under all circumstances is *wrong*—a conviction like that which forbade the early martyrs to offer a pinch of incense to Diana—no argument, however unanswerable, to prove the political and economic futility of War will prevent men from responding to their country's call.

The Socialist assertion that War is an instrument by which the "Capitalist" system maintains itself, that all wars are, directly or indirectly, due to greed for profit, that the workers of the different nations have no quarrel with each other, and that the only way to get rid of War is to socialize the means of production, undoubtedly contains much truth. There has been an economic motive, a desire for personal and collective gain, at the back of nearly all wars; and of this the doings of the makers of Armaments are only the most extreme example. But the bond between the workers of different nations, if it rests on nothing deeper than their sense of a common grievance against those who exploit them, snaps like wool at the threat of War—as the action of the Socialists of the world in 1914 amply proves. And, further, the devotion to Peace which stops short before the Class struggle, and holds that this can only be fought out with bombs and barricades, destroys itself. If history can prove anything, it proves that a Class War ends in reaction and despotism, and that the whole work has to be done again. It can never bring the Kingdom of God.

It seems clear, then, that without a religious bond and a religious motive, the forces that lead men into War are not likely to be held in check. There is one more possible cause of War, which has little to do with either politics or economics, more terrible in its potencies for evil than any other; and here it seems even clearer that nothing but a

real Christianity can lay the spectre. That is, the conflict between Races. The world has become one, and men of varied hue—yellow, dark and black—mingle at many points with the white races of the West. Will they always consent to submit to the white man's supremacy, or will they, as Japan has already done, assert their freedom? What are to be the future relations of white and coloured people in the United States and South Africa, in India and Australasia? Will Japan come into conflict with America? Will an armed and united China assert her place in the world? If the ship of humanity simply drifts, as it seems to be doing now, without wise and far-seeing statesmanship, it will almost certainly crash upon the rocks: race conflicts before which the imagination staggers would appear to be inevitable.¹ There is, I believe, one principle, and only one, that can save the world from such a doom—the frank recognition, in word and act, of the equal worth of all men, of whatever race or colour, in the sight of God. How this principle is to be applied in the varied relations into which different races come, it is impossible now to enquire. If it is not seen and believed in and acted upon, calamity appears certain—whether it first shows itself on the Pacific, or in India, South Africa, or China. Let me give one illustration. Dealing with the South African Colour Bill, especially as it affects Indians in South Africa, a writer in *The Times* of March 30, 1926 (Sir Thomas Watt), declared that the white man, British or Dutch, is determined to remain and to rule.

This matter is to us in South Africa such a vital and fundamental matter that no ethical considerations, such as the rights of man and equal opportunities for all non-Europeans, will be allowed to stand in the way. It is a question of self-preservation with us.

The writer speaks as representing the general opinion of

¹ See J. H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*; also Basil Matthews, *The Clash of Colour*.

the white population in South Africa, and I am not aware that the Union Government has disavowed his views. He quite deliberately places "self-preservation" above all considerations of right and wrong. Could there be a clearer challenge to the whole Christian conception of life? If such opinions prevail and guide the policy of the Union there can only be one issue—a racial war.¹ Neither Indians nor blacks will consent indefinitely to be held under, or used solely for the white man's good. The only policy that can avert such a conflict must be based on the recognition that manhood, and the claims of manhood, are independent of colour. This is not a doctrine that can be proved by argument, any more than the beauty of a picture or the nobility of a human character. It is either perceived or not perceived; and I know of no approach to certitude, on a matter so vital for the future of humanity, other than the revelation of the worth of manhood brought to us by Jesus Christ.

The conclusion, then, of this brief and inadequate enquiry into the relation of Christianity to War is that the whole spirit of the religion lived and taught by Jesus and accepted by his Apostles is at the opposite pole from War as a method of settling disputes between groups of men; that for a century and a half after his death this was strongly felt but its applications were not thought out; that during the next century and a half the general circumstances led to a rapid change of judgment, especially since, by the partial conversion of the Emperor, the Church received protection from the State. From that time onwards official Christianity, while it helped to mitigate some of the worst features of War, did almost nothing to prevent it, and in time became its strong supporter. Both the Catholic

¹ This judgment is not in conflict with a sympathetic appreciation of the desire of the white population to maintain its standard of life.

and the Protestant Churches have favoured "just" wars, and the claim of the State in certain circumstances to compel military service. In spite, however, of this attitude of the Church, there have rarely been wanting individuals and groups among Christians who have repudiated War as wholly contrary to the spirit of human brotherhood, and the sense of the worth of man as man, which are characteristic of the religion of Jesus ; and it is to the re-awakening of this conviction among Christians at large that we must chiefly look for the preservation of humanity from self-destruction by further wars with, as a consequence, the frustration of the Divine purpose to establish among men the Kingdom of God.

SUMMARY

Outline of previous treatment of "Christianity as Life." Real Christianity concerns the whole field of human activity, without distinction of "religious" and "secular." As physical life expresses itself through matter, so the spiritual life inspires the sensuous. The task of striving for human perfection is not for the few but for all ; all true Christians are to be the hands of God in carrying forward His work of creation. Human progress is not automatic, but demands conscious vision and the consecration of the will. The place and significance of belief in Immortality.

CHAPTER XIII

SURVEY AND OUTLOOK

THE purpose of this book is to show that Christianity is in essence neither a system of authoritative beliefs concerning God and the spiritual world, nor an organization set up by Jesus Christ for the guarding and propagation of such beliefs ; but is a new experience of God, as revealed in Jesus, and a way of life based on that experience. That is the significance of the title " Christianity as Life." Our method of dealing with this subject has necessarily been, in the main, historical. We began, as was inevitable, with the attempt to set forth, in broad outline, so far as the Gospels enable us to do so, the lineaments of the Founder himself : his mind and character, and his conception of the work he knew himself Divinely called to do ; and, further, the impression he made on those whom he selected to carry on his work. This led us to discuss in somewhat more detail his thought of the Kingdom of God, and the significance, in relation to its establishment in the world, of his Crucifixion and Resurrection. We then went on to deal with the life and work of his immediate followers during the years that followed : the problems they had to face, especially that raised by the conversion of Gentiles, and the way they met and solved these problems by reliance on his living Spirit as their Guide and Teacher. The work and influence of Paul of Tarsus, and his remarkable presentation of the Gospel of Christ (based on his own personal experience) next received attention, and the still more profound and spiritual interpretation of the Christian message in the writings attributed to John.

We then dealt with the beginnings of the Christian Church: an organization scarcely perhaps contemplated by the Founder himself, but forced upon his followers by the pressure of circumstances. We traced in outline the development of the organization from an almost formless fellowship of believers in Jesus to the rigid and authoritative structure called the Catholic Church; giving special attention to the growth of its Discipline, its provision of a separated Ministry, and the development, in practice and in theory, of Sacramental observances. It was suggested that there is much in this development of the Church which must be ascribed, not to the Divine intention but to the weakness of men—especially to their reliance on human safeguards in preference to trust in the living Spirit of Christ for the preservation of order and unity, and to the loss (in part through want of training and exercise) of the spiritual gifts that marked the primitive Church. This criticism was followed by a chapter on the function of the Church as the instrument, Divine in purpose but very human in constitution, for expressing the fellowship of believers in Jesus, spreading throughout the world the Gospel he had brought to men, and helping in the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

We proceeded to investigate some aspects of the question how far and in what ways the new personal spiritual life, undoubtedly brought into the world by Jesus Christ, has actually been effective in raising and purifying human society. Recognizing the complexity of the question, and the difficulty of assessing the precise weight that must be attached to one among many causes of historical change—allowing also for evils wrought in human affairs by a dominant ecclesiasticism and by obscuratation of the real mind and purpose of the Founder—we yet saw good reasons for holding that essential Christianity has been one of the main factors in human progress. The secret of such

influence was held to lie in the conviction of the inherent and inalienable worth of all human personality—some sense of which is found indeed in the writings of Stoic thinkers both before and after the days of Jesus, but which became a working principle in human life through the revelation brought by him. We traced its effects in the abolition of the Gladiatorial shows, in the growth of the ideal of personal Liberty, and in the purification and strengthening of the life of the Family through a heightened sense of the worth of women and children. In the matter of Slavery we saw that the application of this principle to the criticism of customary ways of life was very imperfect, and that the gradual extinction of Slavery in the ancient and mediæval world must be attributed in the main to other forces than the Christian religion ; but that in modern times it is a revitalized Christianity that we have chiefly to thank for the suppression of the Slave Trade, and for the fact that the practice of Slaveholding is, for the second time in human history, being well-nigh abolished in the world. It is to this force that we must mainly look for the suppression of what remains, and of practices akin to Slavery.

Passing next to the subject of War, we noted that while the ethic of War as a means of deciding disputes between groups of human beings is exactly opposite to that of Jesus, and was so recognized for the greater part of the first two centuries of our era, the question whether a Christian could rightly serve in the Roman armies was during that period never thoroughly thought out ; and that consequently when soldiers were converted to the new religion the Church did not always, or consistently, compel them to leave the army. While the Church Orders directed that soldiers should not be admitted to communion, and the greatest leaders of the Church remained “ pacifist ” in opinion, others held a different view, and the sense of

incompatibility between the two callings was to a large extent lost. After the accession of Constantine, the Church rapidly became content to approve of War, at least in a "just" cause, and so it has remained. Some of the causes of the great change from early "pacifism" to the military Christianity of the Crusades and the period of Feudalism were pointed out; with the reminder that there have rarely been periods when mystics and sectaries in the Church have not reverted to the primitive view of the utter incompatibility between Christianity and War. We suggested that the work of the Society of Friends in this connection is noteworthy in two ways: first in the added emphasis given to the conviction of the inherent worth of manhood by the teaching of the Light of Christ in the souls of all men; and second in their positive contribution to the Christian belief that evil can be overcome by goodness, that the consistent practice of justice and goodwill is a real preventive of War, while armed defence is not. The fact that in the present day the whole fabric of our civilization is threatened with destruction, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God with frustration, if further War is not prevented from breaking out, seemed to justify the amount of attention devoted to this subject; and reasons were adduced for holding that a real Christianity, carrying with it an assured conviction of the worth of all human personality in the sight of God, is the best if not the only means of escaping such destruction.

The above were only illustrative examples of the working out of Christian principles in human society, no attempt having been made to cover the whole ground. Had this been done, we should have had to discuss at some length such questions as the nature of "worldliness," and in what sense Christianity rejects it; the influence of Christianity on the scientific pursuit of Truth, on Art and

Literature and Music—that is to say, the relation of Christian principles to the ultimate Values of life, the True and the Beautiful as well as the Good. Further, it would have been needful to investigate the relations of Christianity to the life of groups of people organized as Nations, each with its State or Government ; to the sentiment of Patriotism, and the methods of preserving order and harmony within the nation by repressing and preventing Crime ; to the attempt to build up the physical and mental life by legislative and administrative measures directed to maintaining Health, including the treatment of the Insane ; to the prevention of the disastrous effects of Competitive industry on great masses of the working population by Factory and Mining laws, and by voluntary agencies like Trade Unions and Co-operative societies ; and finally we should have had to discuss the very large and difficult question whether the “ Capitalistic ” order of society—that is to say, the method of allowing Wealth to be created through Private Property and Free Enterprise, with the Competition that results—can or cannot be reconciled with a Christian order based on Love to all men.

In short, Christianity as here conceived covers the whole of human life : no aspect or section of our activities, nothing in which men and women are interested, can be out of relation to it. Religion is not a department of life ; it is the inner spirit that should raise the whole of life to a higher level, by bringing it into right relations with the underlying Reality that gives it meaning and purpose, and fuses it into order and harmony. As the author of the Epistle to Diognetus put it, “ What the soul is in a body, this Christians are [or should be] in the world.”¹ Religion may perhaps be defined as the progressive discovery and fulfilment of the Divine purpose in and for the world ; as one of the Mystics wrote, “ I would fain be to the Eternal

¹ See above, p. 206.

Goodness what his own hand is to a man.”¹ The religion of Jesus, if rightly understood, contains no division of human activities into “religious” and “secular.” None can be secular, for all are to be religious. As physical life absorbs “dead” matter and makes it live, and in this way expresses itself, so the spiritual life takes up and vitalizes the sensuous. The inward life inspires the outward, while the outward expresses the inward.

This renovation and revitalizing of the whole field of human activity is not the privilege of a few. All Christians without exception, as the Reformers contended, are called to the “perfect” life. It is not the domain of those alone who can only find time for it by abandoning their ordinary concerns. Still less is it the prerogative of a priestly or ministerial caste. Saints in all ages of the Church have seen this in some measure, but few have carried the principle to its legitimate conclusion. “One man can spin,” wrote Tauler, “another can make shoes, and all these are gifts of the Holy Ghost. I tell you, if I were not a priest I should esteem it a great gift to make shoes, and I would try to make them so well as to be a pattern to all.”² In the world as in the Church there is indeed a rightful and necessary division of labour, according to the capacity and vocation of each individual; but all are to be inspired by the one Spirit, and their work is to co-operate to the perfection of the whole.

There seems to be no reason to suppose that the world of human life is so constructed that it must necessarily, of itself, progress to a higher plane of existence. Whatever progress there has been in the past through the working of natural Evolution has been achieved in the main on the physical plane. Man’s progress for the future must be

¹ From the *Theologica Germanica*, quoted by R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 291.

² R. M. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

chiefly in the spiritual region—including in that term his intellectual and æsthetic as well as his ethical capacities. And progress in this sphere is not due to a force pushing (as it were) from behind ; it is the result of *ideals*, consciously accepted and resolutely striven for—a force that draws men onward and upward through the consecration of their wills to the vision they have seen before them. This consecration is Religion in its largest and purest sense ; and Christianity, with its intimation of the Kingdom of God, and its conviction of the indwelling life of Christ the Spirit, is (or may be) the most effective means of achieving such vision and consecration. Christians are called to be creative artists, the hands of God Himself in carrying forward His work of creation. The task of seizing for ourselves, and getting all other men to seize for themselves, this vision of human worth and human perfectibility, and of yielding our lives for its achievement, is the great adventure which it is ours to undertake if we are to be Christians indeed. Here is surely “ the moral equivalent of War ”—a school of heroic virtue which does not require that men, in order to perfect their own spirits, should devote themselves to destroying the bodies of their fellows.

And here, too, we find the necessary place and function of the Christian belief in Immortal Life. Whether, as the Platonists held, this is an endowment of “ the soul ” as such, or whether, as the New Testament seems rather to teach, it is a gift to be striven for and attained, it contains the assurance that spiritual progress, the creative work of perfecting manhood, is not to be cut short by the mere accident of physical death. “ God is not the God of the dead but of the living,” and even the cessation of physical life on this earth, by the slow cooling of the ages, or a sudden impact with another star, could not destroy His purpose to bring all men into communion with Himself. It is not that immortal life begins when the mortal life is

over. Rather, the life of the spirit which Jesus Christ above all others brought within the sphere of man's achievement begins here and now, with the vision and the consecration, and is continued in the great Unknown that lies beyond the portals of physical dissolution.

For Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own.

Such, in baldest outline, would seem to be the place of Christianity in human life—to call and inspire and endow mankind for the achievement of perfection. It centres in the experience of God enjoyed without measure by Jesus Christ, and shared by those who are willing to come into a right relation with himself; it opens up the vision of the Kingdom of God, and gives, through the Cross, the power to consecrate ourselves to its achievement; it brings the humble and willing soul into assurance of an infinite, all-pervading and all-conquering Love.

But, after all, is this assurance a mere dream, or is it *true*? Will it stand against the onslaught of critical enquiry into the nature of the real world in which we live? Is it grounded in Reality, is it supported or is it contradicted by what we know of the constitution of the actual universe? Christianity professes to be Truth as well as Life; and to the consideration of its truth, the truth of its assertions concerning God and Christ and human nature, I hope to turn in another volume.

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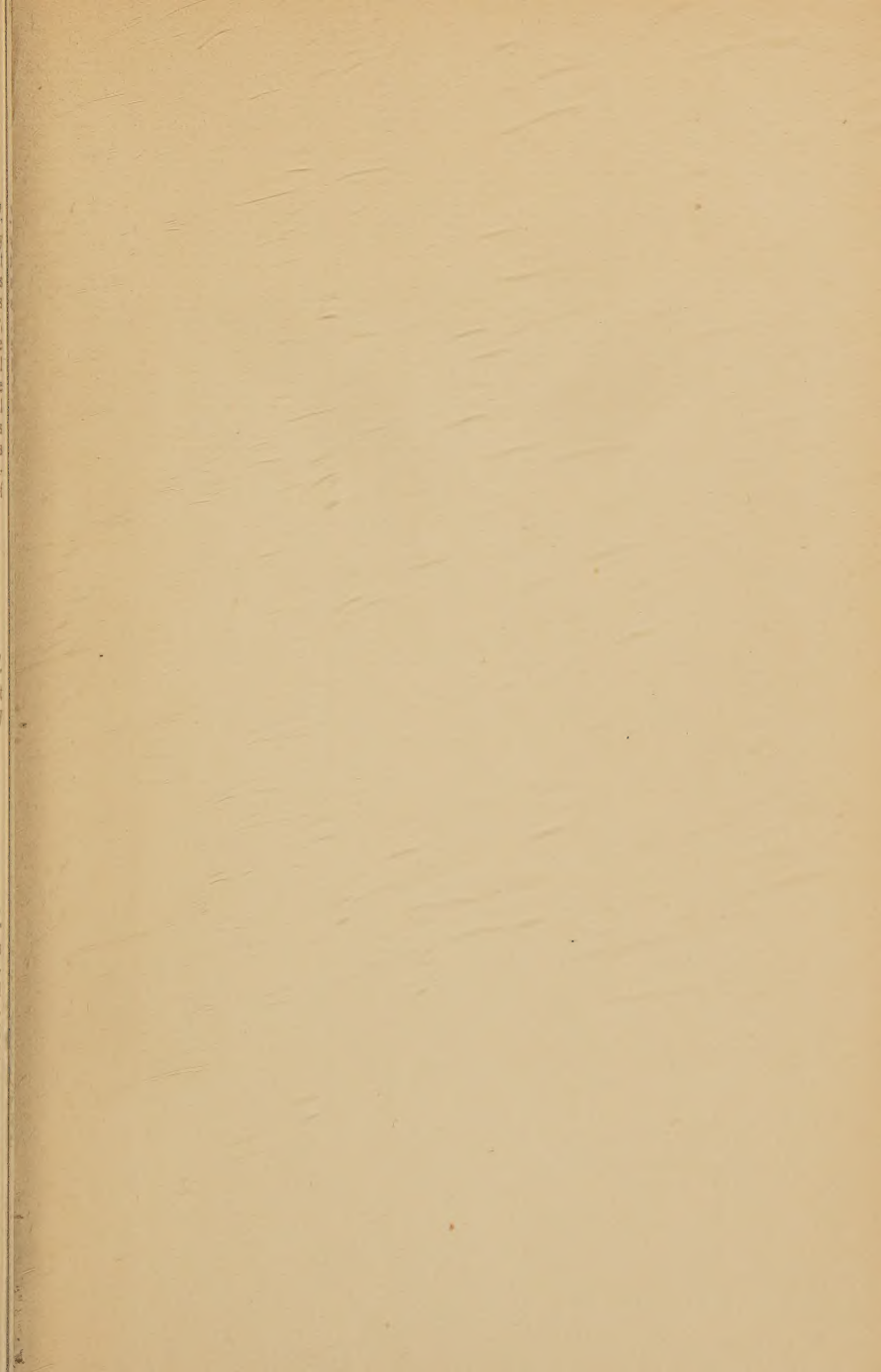
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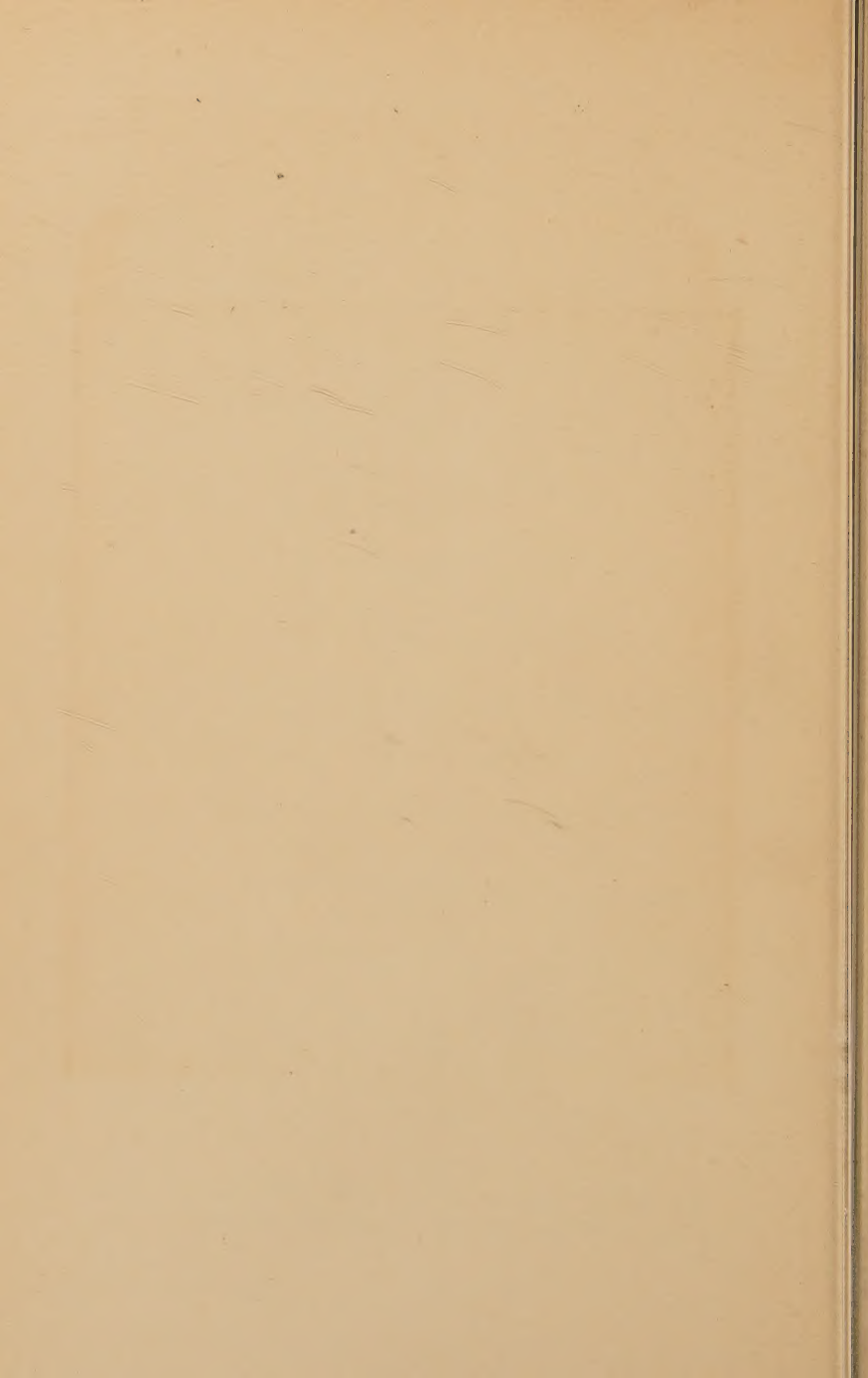
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